

## 2017 Eckhart Tolle on Great Western Classics 8h12m

[Speaker 1] (0:12 - 4:46:18)

Let's make sure we are at home in the present moment and inhabiting the body, so a little bit of your attention is in the body, the inner energy field of the body, and the rest of your attention is on sense perception, and in that way you are anchored in the present moment. The inner energy field provides the anchor for staying present. If you can't feel anything in your body, start with your hands, direct your attention into your hands, and see if you can feel a little bit of aliveness in there.

Oh yes, there it is. And your feet, are they alive? Oh yes, you can feel almost a kind of tingling.

There's energy there, there's life energy in there, and so you can connect with the entire body as a global sense of aliveness as you sit here, because wherever you are, you're here and now. And the mind will not be excessively active when your attention is in the inner energy field. You can be alert without unnecessary interference of thinking, without having to wait for the next moment to provide some kind of improvement.

So the realization comes that this moment is actually good enough, more than good enough, because you're beginning to feel the goodness that is underneath the phenomenal appearance of the present moment, the forms. You are getting in touch with the formless. One of the things we are doing as part of our new venture, which is a kind of experiment using the internet to reach many thousands of people, occasionally I present a book to you that has been very meaningful to me for many years.

There are a number of books that I've carried around, well sometimes I lost copies and then I bought another one, because I moved around so much. And we already in one of the previous sessions, we had one session on one of the greatest books ever written, the Tao Te Ching. We had a session on that and I feel that we are going to have another session on that at some point, not today though.

For today I've chosen a book and before I continue I need to tell you we're not studying something that's external to ourselves. We are not here, it's not a university setting, we are not learning philosophy, we are only using the subject matter of the book as an alternative pointer to the reality within ourselves. So it's not anything, we're not studying anything outside ourselves that would be useless.

So this book that actually I never lost, it's been with me for 25 or 30 years. I bought it new but now the pages are turning yellow, the edges, which means I'm getting old. When books that you bought new turn yellow around the edges you're getting old or the quality of the paper is deteriorating.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, essays which he became famous for. What I'm going to do is just read very brief extracts from one or two of the essays and then we will comment on that. As some of you know Emerson was born in Boston in 1803, died about 80 years later and most of his life he traveled around giving talks.

A very unusual thing, he was kind of a 19th century spiritual teacher, very unusual thing for the 19th century. And some of these essays have enormous power so he must have gone very deep within to be able to write these things. An important thing, just a very brief look at his life.

As many people who are destined to go very deep within he experienced a not very pleasant childhood and early life. At a very early age and this is the case with many people who are forced, either destined to go deeper within or if not they are forced by life's circumstances to go deeper within. And so in his case at the age of eight his father died.

So becoming acquainted with mortality at a very early age, a very painful thing. Then there were five children, his mother was relatively poor so they lived on very little, the mother had to feed five boys. Then later in his early 20s he developed tuberculosis, a potentially fatal illness but recovered from it.

Then he got married and two years later his wife died. So again it became very clear to him, it must have become very clear to him how fragile, how impermanent, fleeting the world of form is, of bodies and forms. So whether he already realized that on a conscious level, but there must have been a very deep having to go deeper within.

And then he studied at Harvard to become a theologian, to become a minister. He became a minister but was not happy with the constraints of the church and then left the church and started just giving talks. And some of the talks became the essays.

So you can see retrospectively how loss is very often a concealed blessing. You don't know it at the time. At the time it just seems a dreadful thing to be happening to you.

But if you look deeper, especially if you're able to come to a state of acceptance, then the moment you surrender to what is, the other side of loss reveals itself to you. There's grace hiding behind every loss. That's good to know next time loss comes to you, as it will of course, because you can't go through life without experiencing loss.

People around you are going to leave you, unless you leave them first. Bodies dissolve. And the older you get, the more clearly you see, wow, all these bodies are dissolving.

A very brief, just a few sentences here on being and the sense of being, finding that within yourself. He says, oh I must, before I read, this is mid-19th century English prose. So at first, it might be for some of you who are not used to reading that kind of thing, Jane Austen or whatever, that kind of thing, may find it a little bit unusual at first.

For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceeds. We first share the life by which things exist and afterwards see them as appearances in nature and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and the fountain of thought.

Here are the lungs of that inspiration which gives man wisdom, of that inspiration of man which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves but allow a passage to its beams, the beams of that great intelligence like the sunlight.

So the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them. In calm hours means when you become still inside, when the mind activity subsides. Then what arises is something that had been obscured by mental noise which is the sense of being and that really is the essence.

Sometimes it's called the sense of I am without any addition to the I am, not I am this or I am that. The sense of beingness, as you may remember from grammar lessons at school, to be and I am is part of the same verb. It's easy to forget when you say I am is the first person singular of to be.

So being and I am is the same. So getting that sense of your innermost identity which has no form to it, no mental concept, no physical appearance, it's deeper than that, a formless sense of being that is there clearly is revealed when the continuous flux of forms, especially mind forms, subsides. So that sense of being is always, has always been there underneath the mental noise.

And when that is realized as the essence of who you are, in other words, you are formless in essence, timeless. The Buddhists call it empty and of course Western scholars misinterpret that. They say it's a nihilistic religion or it's life denying.

They don't realize that what Buddhists call emptiness is the formless essence of all life and timeless. And that is something to be realized of course only in the, it's inextricably one with the what we call the present moment. We could say it is the present moment because it is the space in which everything arises.

All sense perception, all thoughts, all emotion, where do they appear? They appear in that space of being which you could also call unconditioned consciousness, timeless. And that is the eternal in you.

And once that is known directly, not as an intellectual fact or belief, but known directly.

And again, not known as you know the flower or the table or the tree, not known as a subject knows an object, but knowing yourself as the eternal subject, not making yourself into an object. And that's the ego.

That's what happened to the human mind. We made ourselves into objects and then you begin to have a relationship with yourself. And then you start liking or disliking yourself.

And then you talk about that you have a life, not realizing that you are life. And perhaps then only the dog or the cat can still remind you that they don't have a life, they are life. They don't have an unhappy or happy story.

They are life. That's why we talked about nature. Nature still lives in that state of connectedness.

And once you realize that, you recognize that formless essence that you are wherever you look. It is the underlying one, the one life, the one timeless life that you are. And then wherever you look, every tree, every animal, every blade of grass, even the sun, the stars, your dog or your cat, you recognize something there, something that any life form is also an expression of that one.

So you recognize yourself in others, which is the most beautiful thing when you recognize the essence of who you are in the flower. And you recognize it not through any mental concept but through the absence of mental concepts. It is only mental concepts that create the barrier between yourself and the flower when you start calling it something.

Or another human being, the beauty of being with another human being without the interference, the screen of conceptualization, just spacious presence. No matter what the other human being is doing or saying, you are there as spacious presence for whatever arises in this moment. That means you are connected with the one, you are that and recognize it, there is nothing alien anymore, there is ultimately no other anymore.

And this is what he is talking about. The sense of being which in calm hours rises, when we become still now, we know not how it rises within, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them and proceeds obviously from the same source when their life and being also proceeds. And then that is intelligence itself, not the intelligence that can be measured by IQ tests, but primordial, unconditioned intelligence is there when you discover that dimension in yourself.

Here is the fountain of action, spontaneous action arises out of that presence, and the fountain of thought, it can inspire the mind. Creative thought can only come when you become still, contact that dimension, realize that is who you are in essence, and then your mind starts to operate and it becomes inspired, it becomes an instrument rather

than self-serving mind activity. And then all the repetitive thinking gradually subsides and more creative thinking happens.

And in between the creative thinking there are wonderful spaces of not thinking. The greatest thing that can happen to you, and hopefully is happening to you, is to discover within yourself spaces of not thinking. You have not reverted back to the vegetable realm, you have gone beyond thinking.

And from the point of view of the ego, that's not a big thing, it says, how does that solve my problems, not thinking? The conceptual mind does not understand the significance of that. I sometimes say that all I have achieved in life is I don't need to think unless I want to think.

That really is where everything comes from, just becoming comfortable with a state of not knowing from the point of view of the mind. Going to a talk, in my case, sitting down and having the feeling I have absolutely nothing to say, and becoming comfortable with not knowing. Not just when you are going to give a talk, in any situation, you don't need to work it out conceptually, what am I going to, how am I going to deal with this person, how am I going to deal with this situation.

Be there, bring the presence to it, and let that intelligence come through you. It can then use your mind and you find yourself saying something original, or you find yourself saying just the right thing that is helpful for that moment and that person. Or you find yourself taking spontaneous action, suddenly the right thing, the right action arises, you suddenly realize what it is that you need to do, you've been thinking about it for years, and suddenly you let go of thinking, space opened up, and the realization is there.

So, for a balanced life there needs to be the two dimensions in your life, the dimension of form, I call that human, the human dimension, where you are a person with a history, and you think, and you have relatives and relationships, and you have a life situation which is good or bad, or changes from good to bad and bad to good, and you are the being dimension of the human being, most humans don't know that yet, there is the being dimension that is the formless. So, a truly fruitful life is the balance between the formless essence within yourself and the world of form.

Most humans on this planet are lost in form, totally identified with form, that's all they know, totally identified with their mind, every thought form that comes into their head, they are completely identified with it, they are in the grip of form, and then they are surrounded by countless forms, and each form in their life situation demands attention, this matters, this matters, the phone rings, I need to do this, now I need to do that, completely absorbed by form, and everything is serious, has a heaviness and a seriousness to it, and the more you go on living like that, the heavier and the more serious your life becomes, it's a loss of balance, and then all you end up with, this is the subject matter of many movies that you see, is people who are totally trapped on that

dimension only of form, complete absence of transcendence in their life, and sometimes these films are quite nice, you see, what a pity that there's not the slightest glimpse of any transcendence, they're trapped in their little life situations, and so for life to be balanced, there needs to be attention on consciousness, the underlying essence of life is formless consciousness, and that means your sense of identity comes from there, the true sense, so you don't need the world of form anymore to give you your sense of self, because as the Buddha said, when you identify with, when you're looking for yourself in things, I'm giving a very free translation of Buddha, when you identify with the world of form and looking for yourself in forms, in your thoughts, in your possessions, in your achievements, in other people's opinion of who you are, whatever form it is, if you're looking for yourself, or some kind of completion of your sense of self in form, you're going to suffer, that's the message of the Buddha, because there is no self in these things, you cannot find yourself, now Buddhism says, because there is no self, Hinduism will tell you, talks about the self, but they're really talking about the same thing, it's a formless self, now whether you say, no self or formless self, doesn't make any difference, these are just pointers, you may prefer one pointer to the other, I prefer this finger pointing to the moon, and then another, no, this finger pointing to the moon is much nicer, it doesn't matter, the moon matters, and so we lie in the lap of immense intelligence, it is within and without, we are pervaded by it, it fills the entire space of the universe, we lie in the lap of immense intelligence which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth, if we are open to it, it's like having a house, if you close the shutters, no matter how bright the sunlight is, it can't come in, it doesn't mean the shutters are more powerful than the sunlight, it just means shutters are closed, and so if a human being is closed, the vast intelligence cannot operate, or can only operate as a trickle, everybody has a trickle of it, otherwise they wouldn't be alive, so everybody has a little trickle of that coming into their lives, but the full power of it, in most people's lives, is missing, so they live not knowing what vast power is available to them, or to put it more accurately, what vast power they themselves are, it's not, and I say it's not available to you that creates a separation, it is in essence is who you are, now I'd like to read to you a little thing that came to Emerson when he was sitting in his study, and outside there were roses growing outside his window, and here again we come to the power of nature that we talked about the other day, the power of nature to reconnect you with being, and so he looked at the rose, and then he saw this, or realized this, the context of this is that he's talking about people who are always quoting ancient texts only, they're not open to the power of the divine coming through them, they're quoting from the bible, they're quoting from other scriptures, but not realizing that the very power that spoke then is in them now also, it's just a question of opening yourself to it, and then he looked at the roses under his window, the roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones, they are for what they are, they exist with god today, there is no time to them, they are simply the rose, it is perfect in every moment of its existence, before a leaf bud has burst, its whole life acts, in the full-blown flower there's no more, in the leafless root there's no less, its nature is satisfied, and it

satisfies nature in all moments alike, there is no time to it, but man postpones or remembers, he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future, he cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present above time.

There you have the rose teaching Emerson how to live, and then he put it into words, and this shows us that he actually, it was not just a superficial look at a rose, as one would normally, oh what a nice rose, there was a true, he truly gave attention to the rose, and realized how absolutely present the rose is, how absolutely devoid of time it is, carrying no past and no future, and he recognized that the same as Jesus did when he said look at the flowers of the field, look at the lilies, when he said that he didn't just say have a look at the lilies, he said really look, give it your full attention, and then you will realize something there, that human beings, there's a connectedness with being, they haven't gone out as far as humans, they have not left the source of all life, they have not become as differentiated as the humans have, so therefore what they can teach us, show us, is the connectedness with the source of all life, and that's what he saw when he looked at the rose, and then he realized that we can, when we reconnect with that, we don't just become, go back to the vegetative realm, which is beautiful for everything vegetative there, but not for us, it's not our destiny to go back to become a rose, or a tree, or a blade of grass, we transcend the thinking stage, we transcend the differentiation of the thinking stage, and we then regain the oneness that was once lost, that ancient mythologies point to as the lost paradise, and when you regain something, as I often point out, you regain it at a deeper level with knowing consciousness.

And so the last sentence here is important, he saw here, of course, that usually man does not live in the present, but with reverted eyes, reverted eyes, he doesn't look at what's right here, he reverts his eyes and looks, laments the past, oh dear, regrets about what happened, guilt, regret, memories, things went wrong in my life situation, this happened, that happened, or heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future, I need to get, I need to get there, where is it, I need to get to the next moment, the riches that surround you that are part of the now. So the lesson then is to truly look so that something imparts itself to you from anything natural, so the anything natural reconnects you with, can reconnect you with being. By the way, when he uses his words in the 19th century, so there was still a tendency for there to use male pronouns, the same as the Bible, and so on, so obviously when he says man, he means man and woman, and he tends to use the masculine pronoun, so you have to excuse that.

Man is a stream whose source is hidden, always our being is descending into us from we know not whence. Most humans regard themselves as a surface phenomenon, you are here, no sense of deeper connectedness with life, you are here like as if somebody had put you here on this planet and there's me and there's the rest of the world, the rest of the universe, the lack of connectedness. If you go deeper within and you do it by finding

the dimension of stillness underneath thinking, then you connect with the source, the depth within yourself, and there's vast depth.

Man is a stream whose source is hidden. And when, once it's open, so all you have to really do, if you can even call it doing, is open the door. And even that is not a doing because really keeping the door closed through continuous thinking is the doing.

So it's more like a stop doing and then it opens. In that sense, some of those teachers are right saying you can't do anything because it's the doing that obscures the being. And so once that is open, then you gradually learn to do and be at the same time.

You can act without losing connect. At first you find it only in very still moments, perhaps in nature, and you go, ah, ah. And then gradually you see if you can stay connected when you're going shopping for food, supermarket, or traveling from here to there, carrying alertness, alert presence, rather than continuously thinking entity.

Always about the next moment or the last moment. This is the only, you may have noticed that I only ever talk about one thing. And this is it.

Now he uses in one of his essays the term the over-soul. And by over-soul he means the unity of all things. The unity, the oneness of all things.

All things are ultimately one. Not only that all things are connected to everything else, which physicists now tell us is actually the case. There's no division between this body and this table and this flower and those other bodies.

There's no real division on the subatomic realm. And so not only is everything connected with everything else, a web of interconnectedness, but also everything is connected to a common source. It has come out of the common source.

It returns to the common source, which is formless and timeless. And the common source remains in every form as its innermost essence. And so this common source, this unity he calls the over-soul.

And he says, that unity, that over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other, that common heart of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission, that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents and constrains everyone to pass for what he is and to speak from his character, which means from his essence, and not from his tongue, and which ever more tends and aims to pass into our thought and hand and become wisdom and virtue and power and beauty.

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime, within man is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal one. And this deep power in which we exist and whose



beatitude is all accessible to us is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object are one.

We see the world piece by piece as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree, but the whole of which these are the shining parts is the soul, the oneness, seeing the oneness behind the multiplicity, seeing the oneness of all forms in every form. And what he calls the soul, we could also use the word the consciousness, the one unconditioned consciousness that pervades the entire universe, the one reality. So when he says here the soul, if you want to use consciously a different pointer, that's fine.

All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ but animates and exercises all the organs, is not a function like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet, is not a faculty but a light, is not the intellect or the will but the master of the intellect and the will, is the vast background of our being in which they lie, an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed.

From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing but the light is all, the background, the background space, consciousness looks through these eyes, speaks through this mouth, becomes form and yet remains untouched as a formless. So can you go through life dealing with the foreground of things that need doing, things that you need occasionally to think about and yet remain aware of the background to your life, the consciousness, the light of consciousness or the space in which everything appears. Another way of putting it, can you be aware that you are aware at this moment, can you sense the awareness underneath what you are perceiving with your senses at this moment without which there would be no perception, can you sense the awareness underneath any kind of emotional feeling you might be having at this moment, can you sense the awareness out of which any thought that might arise in your mind at this moment comes and comes, dissolves back into the presence that you are, that's the formless, that's timeless and so that is the vast background of your being, an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. A man is the facade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What you see is the facade of the temple, not only what you see as the physical form of this human being but also the psychological form of this human being is also the facade still of the temple, it is not in essence who that being is.

What we commonly call man or woman, the eating, drinking, planting and counting man, eating, drinking, planting, counting, doing all kinds of things, what we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man does not as we know him represent himself but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect but the soul whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect it is genius, when it breathes through his will it is virtue, when it flows through his affection it is love and the blindness of the intellect begins

when it would be something of itself.

The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself. So the blindness of the intellect begins with the belief that you are something of yourself, that is the mind, the self-serving mind. The blindness of the, the weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself, that is the ego, believing that you are an independent, autonomous, self-sufficient entity that has been put into this world from somewhere, not realizing you have come out of it and you are an intrinsic part of the totality and so there comes the sense of separateness, of alienation, with that comes the continuous neediness of the ego and with that comes the continuous underlying fear that's always there when you're not connected, there's fear no matter what you may have achieved in the world of form, the fear will not leave you until the sense of separateness leaves you, you reconnect. How wonderful to see that all spiritual teachings in essence are one.

This is why I love to go back to some of the ancient books and they might use very different words but once you recognize the truth in yourself, you see the truth wherever it comes, in whatever form it comes, and you say, yes, there it is, I recognize it. And so this is sometimes being called the perennial philosophy, there's a thread that goes back thousands of years, the same truth being expressed in different words and different forms throughout the ages, in the past by very rare individuals here and there, but somehow it survived, whatever form they left behind, writing or, it survived, somehow there were always enough humans who had at least an inkling that there was something extremely precious and valuable there. So that's the perennial philosophy that, I don't know who first used that word, there is a very wonderful book by Aldous Huxley of the same title, Perennial Philosophy. So the truth is there and there's no arguing once you have it in yourself, you don't attach yourself to the form in which it's being expressed, that's what religions traditionally do, you get attached to the form, not realizing the form points to an underlying essence, which is one, all religions are one, and you don't even need a religion to see the essence.

You are enough. If you have a religion, fine, you don't need it, but if you have it, it can take you, if you use it rightly, it can take you deeper, if you use it wrongly, you get more entangled in ego through your religion. There is no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect ceases and God, the cause begins.

There is no separation between you and the source, it's a continuous, you could almost think of it, if you think of it visually, you are connected, if you are walking around a globe, and every being on the globe is connected to the center with a thread, it's a visual representation of it, you're connected. Now if you're only, if the surface reality of where you're walking around is all you have, then you see the separation between me, you, and the other human being, or what other life form, or you see the separateness. When you are aware of the center within, then you see the unity.

So you're walking around this globe, there's one human being, here's another human being, disconnected because they're only aware of the surface. If you're aware of the depths within yourself, then suddenly you see that you are one with the other, you're connected at the center. It's a visual, of course, somewhat incomplete representation.

The sovereignty of this nature whereof we speak is made known by its independency of those limitations which circumscribe us on every hand. The soul circumscribes all things. As I have said, it contradicts all experience.

In like manner, it abolishes time and space. The influence of the senses has, in most men, overpowered the mind to that degree that the walls of time and space have come to look solid, real, and insurmountable. And to speak with levity of these limits is, in the world, a sign of insanity.

Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul. A man is capable of abolishing them both. You could say, now when he uses inverse measures, you could say, I said that somewhere also, the vastness of space that you see when you look out at night into this clear sky.

And that was when I was a child, even before... No, about the same time when I had mentioned previously, I would often go out into nature to reconnect with being when I was a child. And one other thing I did that helped me when I was a child, and that didn't happen until I went to live in Spain at the age of 13 and a half, where often the sky is clear, especially in the summer.

And so we lived on the top floor with a... I would climb up onto the roof of the building at night and lie in a deck chair and just look at the vastness of the night sky. And I didn't realize at that time that my mind actually became still.

I was just in a state of awe, and I didn't realize at the time I didn't even know anything about meditation. I didn't know I was in a state of meditative stillness. And there was a sense of awe and of feeling speechless.

And what made me speechless was not the... Well, it was wonderful to see all the thousands of points of light that we call stars or suns, but more than that, the vastness of the space itself. I already knew a little bit.

I was interested in astronomy, and I started reading, and I knew a little bit about the vast distances involved there and the vastness of space, of what a light year is. And it was so inconceivable and totally beyond anything the mind could understand. Even the greatest scientists cannot understand the limitless space.

So I sometimes ask myself, well, what is beyond space? And if it's limitless, it's inconceivable. There's a vastness there that is totally ungraspable and inconceivable.

And that, I believe, what he's pointing at, Emerson, here, is what you see as the vastness of space is the externalized vastness of your own being, of being itself. You see it spreading, spread out there. It contains all things.

It's the externalized vastness of consciousness itself, and it appears to us as space. Now, space, of course, is nothing, really. It just enables everything to be, but in itself, it is no thing.

It is nothing. So, and time equally, the vast stretches of time, inconceivable. And does time have an end?

Does time have a beginning? And here, too, what we perceive as endless vast time is the externalization of the timeless within. And that gets stretched out when we go into the sense-perceived world.

It gets stretched out like, it becomes skimmed milk. The cream is within you, and then the universe is the skimmed milk, diluted. So that also can put you in touch with yourself.

Just look into contemplation of space. It doesn't have, it could be the space of the night sky. It could even be the space of, in a room.

If you go into an ancient church or cathedral, it's particularly beautiful to have, to be, if you become aware of, but any room will do it, become aware of, okay, what's the essence of this room? There's the floor, the ceiling, the walls, the chairs, the furniture in it, the people. Okay, but is there more to it?

Yes, of course, there's more to it. What really matters about this room is the space. Without the space, there wouldn't be a room.

And there's usually, people would not be aware of the space, they would be aware only of what's in the space, the furniture, the walls, the people, whatever it is. And so, if you can become aware, not only of what's in the space and what circumscribes the space, but the space itself, the awareness of space creates in you the awareness of the formless within you. Because only the moment you become aware of space around you, and I can't tell you how, you just have to do it, because there's nothing to grasp, there's nothing to be aware of.

So, the mind asks, how can I be aware of space if there's nothing there to be aware of? And that's precisely it. What is left when you're aware of something where there's nothing?

What's left is awareness itself. That's why being aware of space is such a powerful thing, because what we really become aware of then is awareness, nothing, no content. And so, it's a beautiful meditation, wherever you go, you can do it.

There's even a line in the Tao Te Ching which speaks of what, I don't, I can't remember literally, that it says, there's a bowl and the essence of the vessel or the bowl is the emptiness inside the space. And so, to make it a bowl, there's the two aspects, and these are the two aspects to every life form, form and formless. Form and the essence, the formless.

And so, if you can be aware that that applies to you also, just like the bowl or like the room, in yourself also there is content, there's furniture inside you, thoughts. Some people have a lot of furniture inside. Room is just crammed full with furniture, one thought after another.

And so, but there must be some space there, because the furniture somehow has to get in there, so space is there. You just have to know it's there. There is space inside you already.

You don't have to produce it or achieve it somehow, just realize it's already there, because otherwise nothing could be there in your mind. The mind itself in essence is space, which is consciousness. So, most people are so seduced by the furniture, so seduced by all these fascinating bits of furniture or furniture they complain about, they don't want, but it's there, and so that they're never aware of the space around the furniture inside themselves.

What a limitation, which means all you're stuck with is your life situation, your limited life, which consists of content, content, the content of your life. And no matter what you do with the content of your life, it's never satisfying. On the level of content alone, you will always come to a point of frustration, because you never, no matter how you rearrange the furniture, I'm using of course, as you know, furniture as a metaphor for everything in your mind, no matter how you arrange the furniture, or even if you throw some bits out and take other bits in, you always find it's not quite it, it's not, you always very quickly come to a point of dissatisfaction, because the transcendent dimension is missing from your life.

And what is the transcendent dimension? The formless space, not realize that that is the essence of who you actually are. And so people go through life frustrated, complaining that the world isn't doing what it should be doing to make them happy, not realizing the world cannot make you happy, it's not in the, it's not in its power, because the world is the world of form.

It can challenge you so that you go deeper and finally find the formless, that's what it's there for really. And of course, the world is good at that. It always does that.

And once you know that, then every challenge you can actually welcome. And every loss, you can actually, even though you might weep, you can still welcome it. Because you can see how precious loss also is, because what is loss in whatever form?

Loss is, some form has been removed from your life and has left behind an empty space. And that happens when somebody close to you dies. Suddenly, there's an empty space.

And that is, from the point of view of form, is very painful. And of course, you will cry, you will weep, because there is the reality of form, but there's also the deeper reality of the formless. And if you can be with both, then in the presence of death, although you may weep, there will be a deep peace that you sense, because the formless shines through the space that's left behind.

And that's the sacred, the divine, God, whatever you want to call it. It shines through. Wherever there's loss, there's grace.

The grace is, something has opened up. And that's the essence, that is the essence of the form that passed away also. And that is the indestructible, that is the deathless, as it's in Buddhism, the closest Buddhism ever gets to talking about God is death, the deathless realm, Amaravati, the deathless.

That's how wonderful to see. And then, balance comes into your life. The dance between form and formlessness.

The dance between the world and spirit, if you want to call it that. I don't use it very often. It's too many associations there.

And then, the beautiful thing is, the world is no longer a frustrating place. When you realize that the world was actually meant to be frustrating, it's no longer frustrating, then you recognize whatever challenge comes, you say, oh, okay. Either you resist, or you go deeper.

That's always the choice. There's a beautiful line in a book, I believe it's called *The Road Less Travelled*. And it has the best first sentence, or first two sentences of any book.

That's why I never read the whole book. It says more or less this, life is difficult, and when you know that and accept that, it's no longer difficult. It's so simple.

Once you know, you don't expect something that the world cannot give you, happiness, fulfillment, peace. And once you realize you don't need the world to give you that, because that is already, that emanates from the formless dimension within yourself. Then, ironically, maybe the universe has a sense of humor or irony.

Then, ironically, the world and the things of the world are actually quite nice. They're quite satisfying, and you appreciate them. It's not that you deny.

I don't believe that those ancient practices that almost aggressively deny the reality of form are that helpful. I don't think you can get to the, find the formless within by fighting or aggressively denying the world of form. The world of form is also an expression, it's all

an expression of the one.

And so, the world then becomes a much, a place where you can appreciate whatever form is around you arises, no matter whether it's large or small. Mostly it's small, because mostly your life consists of small things. There's a flower, there's the shopping to do, there's go from here to there, get into the car, take one step at a time.

It's all small, really, and you can appreciate the preciousness of all the things in your life. And it's suddenly, what before was frustrating, now is actually quite pleasant. Why has it become pleasant?

You no longer demand from the world, which includes places you go to, which includes people you meet or have relationships with, which includes situations in your life that arise, which includes achievements, successes or failures, whatever. You don't, you don't demand that they should give you what they can't. And you can let them be, you can honour them, but you never, you're not again going to a situation or a place and say, I demand that you fulfil me, or go into a relationship and say, I demand that you make me happy.

Or whatever condition you encounter, some success and expect ultimate fulfilment through it. No, briefly, yes, and then things happen. So with this comes then the freedom, freedom from, you could call it freedom from the world.

It doesn't mean you disengage from the world, but your attachment to things lessens and then goes. There is appreciation, there is honouring the beauty of life, the beauty of even the smallest things, yes, but without the attachment to that, you don't need that anymore. And you can let go when it's time to let go.

This always comes, wherever you go and whatever you do, at some point it's time to let go. And to the, as long as there's attachment, it's a painful thing when life says, okay, let go now. Oh, no, I can't.

It's part of who I am. And that's painful. And then life may even tear it out of your hands.

It's even more painful, but it could be so simple. You could say, there you go. And then some other form appears.

Oh, that's nice. And you know full well there's nothing that is yours ultimately. The whole thing that you can possess something is, of course, an illusion.

You only, for a little while, it comes into, you look after it and then you hand it on. You look after it, pass it on. Let's see what freedom, and then you appreciate the beauty of all things.

And you see beauty where before you didn't see beauty, also in the smallest things. And

you don't have to take acid for that. But, of course, the truth is everything around you is intensely alive and beautiful.

It's only the judgmental mind that creates the screen, a barrier of conceptualization between yourself and the aliveness of the world. But the essential aliveness is within, in the formless. So don't look for the aliveness in there.

Nature can hint at it, can give you, connect you with the own aliveness. Yes. The essence of all life is within.

The action of the soul or consciousness is oftener in that which is felt and left unsaid than in that which is said in any conversation. It's not in the words, it's in the spaces. It broods over every society and they unconsciously seek for it in each other.

You unconsciously seek the formless in the other. We know better than we do. We do not yet possess ourselves and we know at the same time that we are much more.

I feel the same truth how often in my trivial conversation with my neighbors that somewhat higher in each of us overlooks this byplay and jove nods to jove from behind. Each of us. God nods to God from behind each of us.

You're engaged in superficial conversation but there's something in the background that far transcends anything in the world of form, which includes words and thoughts. And if you can sense that in yourself, then you can also sense it in the other. And if you sense that in the other, all relationships become holy relationships, as the Course in Miracles would put it.

And you recognize the holy in every relationship, even if it's a brief one. And there is something in you that knows and recognizes the truth. We know truth when we see it.

Let skeptic and scoffer say what they choose. Foolish people ask you when you have spoken what they do not wish to hear. How do you know it is truth and not an error of your own?

We know truth when we see it, as opposed to opinion, as we know when we are awake that we are awake. Do you know that you are awake? Yes, you must be.

So this is direct realization. So if you know that you are awake, that means what is it that you really know? You know that you're awake, you can subtract anything that appears in your consciousness at this moment, any form, and you could then be left with just the state of being awake.

And there's the formless. One more sentence. Under all this running sea of circumstance, whose waters ebb and flow with perfect balance, lies the aboriginal abyss of real being.

Circumstances, situations, world of form, comings, goings, underneath it all, the



timeless, formless. Become familiar with the state of not needing to continuously interpret and judge what is happening to you or around you. You don't need that.

You actually become more intelligent when you don't continuously and compulsively interpret what's happening or what's in front of you, what you're perceiving. That's an old habit going back thousands and thousands of years. And the habit says, no, I have to interpret.

I become stupid if I don't. I won't know what's going on anymore if I can't judge this person that I'm meeting or I can have some kind of opinion or I like or dislike this situation or this, I want this, I don't want this, should be happening, that shouldn't. All the stuff that the mind produces continuously that detracts from the simplicity and power of the present moment, that the mind puts out the screen of conceptualization.

And so in living without the compulsive screen of conceptualization is the great liberation. And so you invite into your life the spaces, the one space really, but spaces of not knowing, not needing to know, not just being present with what is, just giving attention to what is at this moment. Which implies, of course, accepting the is-ness of whatever this moment brings, whatever form arises in this moment.

Can you say yes to what arises in whatever form? Because you should say yes because otherwise you suffer. Because what is already is.

So if you argue internally with what is, you really make the universe into an enemy. I don't want this, but there it is right in front of you. You say, okay, this is what is.

You become the space for it. And that's a very quick way of accessing the space consciousness in you, by simply bringing an acceptance into the present moment in whatever form it comes. Where before there was an irritation, where before there was a complaint, where before there was an angry reaction, there's now saying, oh, okay, that's what is.

You open your arms and say, yes to now. Present moment is my friend. I've had the enemy, present moment has been my enemy for long enough.

I'm now making friends with the present moment. Why? Because it's all I have.

There's nothing else ever. Why not make friends with the present moment in whatever form it appears? And the secret then, of course, the miracle is if you make friends with the present moment, no matter in what form it appears, then the formless opens up within you because you become who you already were, space for it.

You are the space for that. That's all. So the primordial spiritual practice, or if you want a mantra, can I be the space for this?

You can ask yourself the question when situations arise that before you might have complained about, been irritated about, whatever the reaction would have been, can I be the space for this? And usually, or I would say always, you will find, yes, I can be this. You just forgot that you can be the space for it.

You forgot that you are the space for whatever arises in your life because you are the now, you are the consciousness in which it arises. So you become who you already are. Can I be the space for this?

With that is the end of all irritation or angry reactions or complaining, inner no, don't want this, want something else. Yeah, but this is what you have now. And it doesn't mean that you get stuck with what is.

The amazing thing is you move on much more quickly when you bring a yes to the present moment. Then life moves on. You've passed the test.

If you bring no to the present moment, it means you haven't passed. Okay, you get stuck. It's all expressed beautifully in the film Groundhog Day.

You can live in resistance. You can try whatever you will. As long as you are stuck in your negativity, you have to do it the lesson again.

You wake up the same day. This protagonist wakes up in the same day every day until finally an inner shift happens and he begins to say yes to the present moment. And then suddenly all the unpleasantness of this day that he has to repeat again and again, all the unpleasantness of that day becomes actually quite pleasant.

He's beginning to help people because he says yes to situations. So he becomes a helpful, beneficial presence in that day. And suddenly everybody loves him in that town.

And finally he becomes so accepting, whereas before he dissed, he hated where he was and he hated his work. Many people live like that, hating everything, complaining continuously, nothing and nobody's ever good enough. And then suddenly the shift happens and finally he's in the same place and he says to his girlfriend, oh let's stay here, it's quite nice.

And then suddenly he's free and he's no longer forced to repeat the same day. Deep spiritual lesson in there and that's how it is. So it's the egoic mind tells you if you accept what is, you'll be stuck.

This is not the case. Acceptance is the beginning for powerful action if action is required. And non-acceptance, the action that you take on the basis of non-acceptance is never powerful.

It always is tainted with negativity and you could say I call it karmic action. It produces

more unhappiness, more karma. So a very quick way then of accessing the space consciousness within, the formless, is not resisting the form that the present moment takes in your life internally.

Wow, huge shift. When you can try it in this evening, there may be little things happening on your way home. Wow, non-resistance, greatest power there is.

Welcome. It's time today to look at another book. This has become traditional.

From time to time I choose a book that I look at with you, books that are dear to me. And usually these books are part of the arising consciousness, what somebody once called the perennial philosophy, the arising awareness in the collective consciousness that started a long time ago. And sometimes for long periods of time became obscured, covered up and then arose again.

So there's a thread running through as almost as far as we can look back in the history of humanity. There's already an arising awareness which never reached the majority of the population, probably only always reached a few individual people. But it's been there.

I sometimes call them early flowers. In the same way I talk about it in a new earth. Before the first flower opened on the planet, there was already vegetation.

Had been there for millions of years and only then at some moment the first flower appeared. And probably didn't survive for very long and it perhaps took a long time before another one came and then gradually a few more and then perhaps conditions again became hostile to the flowering and then disappeared again for a while and then more came. Of course, there's a greater flowering now of consciousness than at other times.

But when we look back at the early flowers or flowerings, we see that what they show us still applies today and the patterns they talk about that have discovered in the human mind that prevent us from flowering, from being more conscious, those patterns still operate in all those humans even to this day. All humans who are not yet going through the awakening process. The patterns what the Buddha talked about, how suffering arises if one lives in disconnectedness with the deeper source and the patterns in the mind that create suffering and Jesus talked about it, how we create our suffering, how we are always in tomorrow but never today.

And all these things still apply so we can learn a lot by looking back at the early teachers and see that it still applies to a large part of humanity. So some of the people I choose are a little obscure perhaps. In other words, very few of you may have read them or even heard of them and this applies probably to today's book.

The book I've chosen for today is by a Greek philosopher called Plutarch. Probably in Latin, in Greek the name is Plutarchos and his Latin name is Plutarchus. Plutarch was

born in the year 46 and he died in 120.

So whether he ever heard of Christianity, I don't know. Probably not. When he was born in 46, the first gospels that tell us of the life and teachings of Jesus weren't even written.

And this particular book is a collection or a selection of his essays. He was famous for writing essays. This is the Penguin Classic Edition, a selection of Plutarch's essays.

If you look up Plutarch in the dictionary, it will tell you or the encyclopedia, it'll tell you that he's most famous for his collection of biographies of famous Greek and Romans, Greeks and Romans called the Lives or the Parallel Lives. And that's good, but I find his essays more interesting. It's amazing when writings survive over such a long period of time.

It's a miracle that almost 2,000 year old writings have come to us through a time period where for several centuries almost nobody could read and write anymore after the collapse of the Roman Empire and the arising of what is sometimes called the Dark Ages. Almost nobody except some monks in monasteries were able to read and write. And so somehow these manuscripts survived.

People must have seen, appreciated their value and kept them safe and copied them again and again. And then the next generation again, some of those people saw their value, copied them and copied them and kept them safe and miraculously they survived. It's often the case that what's truly valuable does survive because somehow there is something, there's a faculty in humans in that even those humans who are not really awake yet, some of them can still recognize that there is a truth there that is very important.

And so they might not have been able to practice what these teachers talk about, but they saw the value and then they copied it. Oh, this sounds so good without being able to live it. Plutarch was Greek, but he lived much later than Socrates and Plato.

They lived 500 years or so before him. At the time he lived when the Roman Empire was already occupying the whole Mediterranean area and beyond. So he was born in Greece, but he also became famous in Rome and he lived in Rome for part of the time and was highly regarded as a writer and teacher.

And in Greece, his homeland, he also became a high priest at the most important spiritual site in ancient Greece at Delphi. He became a high priest at the Oracle of Delphi. Now this may look like a little book, but it's actually 400 pages of very small print.

So there's a lot here and I've chosen just one of the essays for us to look at and look at the important points, what we can still learn from him. And the essay I've chosen is called On Contentment. That's the translation from the Greek.

So it's traditionally called in English On Contentment. That is already questioned by some people whether that is a correct translation of the original. The original words that he uses as a title for this essay is *euthymia*, which means good spirits or cheerfulness.

It describes that state of consciousness that is, one could even say happiness, but happiness sounds a little bit too superficial. So there is good spirits, cheerfulness. Seneca, the famous Roman writer, translated some of his essays and this is one of the essays that he translated.

And he called it *Tranquillitas Animae*, which means something like tranquility of the spirit or tranquility of the soul. But he added a subtitle when Seneca translated it and the subtitle reads, how the mind may always pursue a uniform and unimpeded course at peace with itself, viewing its circumstances with a light heart and a joy that is unbroken so that it stays steady and calm, never raised or depressed. That's a long subtitle.

So he has already described the essence of this essay. It's about one's state of consciousness. It's about the state of inner peace.

It's about looking at what it is in humans, what it is in the human mind that tends to and habitually does obstruct the state of inner peace. He also points out somewhere there is an innate state of joyfulness in every human. And in most humans, that innate state of joy, of aliveness, of peace, but not a dead peace, but an intensely alive peace, that state is in many humans is covered up by unconscious mind activity, dysfunctional thinking.

And so humans are out of touch with that innate state, which is that really everybody's birthright, but they are out of touch with that. And we need to discover the reasons why they are out of touch. What is it that blocks that in humans?

It's not enough to say there is in you the kingdom of heaven. Of course, Jesus used that term, which is an inner state of being. It's wonderful to point to it, but it's, and occasionally it's the kingdom of heaven response when you hear that there is in you that deep peace that's always there.

And sometimes it happens that when it's pointed out, something goes within and says, yeah, I can feel that now. And that's wonderful. But it's equally if not more important to see, well, you can feel it now.

But what happens when in a minute from now, when something happens, the slightest thing goes wrong, and it's gone again, or some thought comes into your head, and you don't feel it anymore. So it's as important, if not more important to become aware what it is in us that blocks that. And this is so, that is a tradition of a teaching that points that out.

The Buddha belongs to that tradition also. He summarizes that which blocks that in us with the word desire. But there's many implications there.

When the Buddha talks about desire as the greatest obstacle, we would have to closely look at that. Perhaps on some other occasion, we'll be talking about the teaching of Buddha. So this essay is about that, what is called contentment.

Here really is the state of inner peace, alive peace. And mainly he teaches us to look at how this becomes obstructed. Once we know how the certain structures that are inherited in our minds, collective mind structures, once we recognize them when they happen in us, then that's the first step towards freedom.

If we don't know what the habitual patterns in the human mind are that block this awareness, then every time they arise, we get taken over by them. We haven't recognized them. Once we know how to recognize them, we already have one foot out of the unconsciousness.

We're already out. And the element of choice begins to be there, of not being drawn into that. There's another term that is used by ancient philosophers that expresses the same truths that I've just talked about in a negative way.

And that term is ataraxia in Greek, which is lack of mental disturbance or turmoil. So it doesn't say joy or inner peace, it explains it in negative terms. It says lack of turmoil or disturbance inside.

So many Greek philosophers, ancient philosophers talked about that. Now let's go to the essay itself. He talks at the beginning about what he calls there is an emotional or irrational part of the mind that always races away from what is actually here.

So that what he calls the emotional or irrational part of the mind is the unconscious mind. And he recognized that it has a tendency of always taking you away from what is right here, from the present moment. So that's his first insight, which of course is still very much the case.

Now he looks at what are the conditions necessary for inner peace or contentment. I'll read the first little bit to you. Whoever it was who said that contentment is impossible for anyone who busies himself with personal or public affairs makes contentment in the first place an expensive commodity if its price is inactivity.

So inactivity, he says, does not lead to contentment. In fact, it often leads to the opposite of contentment. So it's an illusion for people to believe that if I seek a life of withdrawal, I will be content and happy.

He gives an example from the Odyssey in Homer where one of the characters spent 20 years by himself away from civilization with an old woman to look after him who served his food and drink. And although he shunned his country, home and kingdom, nevertheless, his inactivity and boredom had distress as a constant close companion. Even absolute inactivity is likely to induce discontent in many cases.

And he says that people who seek fame and status should go along with this aspect of their nature and engage in politics and public life because they are inherently more likely to be thrown off balance and to be harmed by inactivity. So whatever it is that you feel drawn to, go there. Don't believe that by withdrawing from life or from getting engaged in life, you're going to find the true inner peace, which of course is spiritual awakening.

Undoubtedly, to occasionally withdraw into solitude can be a very helpful thing for anybody and a wonderful thing to occasionally withdraw. But to see that as a goal, as some people do, that if I didn't have my busy life and all the things that I have to deal with, then I could really grow spiritually. If I didn't have all the problems that I have, then I could really put all my effort into a spiritual awakening.

And that is a delusion. You start with spiritual awakening with where you are right now and consider your present circumstances as the ideal starting point and training ground for awareness of our presence. Instead of thinking, I need to get away from start here, then they may shift and change.

It doesn't mean you get stuck. If you resist your present circumstances, you get stuck. Showed wonderfully in the movie, if anybody is left on the planet who hasn't seen it, Groundhog Day, one of my favorite movies, which shows a man who is forced to repeat the same day again and again.

Every morning he wakes up, he wakes up into the same day. And it doesn't change until something within him changes. But so that expresses a very important universal truth.

There are people, he says, who think that freedom from distress resides in one way of life in particular. For instance, farming or being a bachelor or kingship, being a king or very VIP. And he called somebody who said, Menander, another philosopher, said, I used to think that rich people, because they have no debts, don't sigh at night.

I used to think that rich people, because they have no debts, don't sigh at night. Of course they do. Or toss and turn or moan, poor me.

I used to think they slept a pleasant, peaceful sleep. And this philosopher, he quotes, he then goes on to explain that in his experience, even the rich suffer exactly as the poor do. And then says, he asks himself, is grief related in some way to life?

Is grief inescapable? If you are alive, ask that question. But of course, the very reason why he writes this is, it is not inescapable.

Is grief related in some way to life? It consorts with a life of luxury, is inseparable from a life of fame, grows old with a life of poverty. Grief, grief, grief.

So if you exchange one way of life for another, it does not eradicate from the mind the factors which make it distressed and disturbed. And one of the main factors that make

the mind distressed and disturbed is, it does not know how to make proper use of one's present circumstances. How to make proper use of one's present circumstances.

That's why I just said, you start with where you are now. And that's the spiritual practice is to be applied to your present circumstances. And it's extremely helpful to regard your present circumstances as ideal for your spiritual practice.

It doesn't mean you cannot take action to change them. It's being aligned with the is-ness of your present circumstances. Action can be taken on the basis of the alignment with the is-ness, on the basis of the acceptance of what is.

There's a peace suddenly, and then action can be taken if action is possible or desirable, necessary. So not being able how to use one's present circumstances is a very common thing, was then and is now. These are the storm winds that vex, both rich and poor, trouble both married and single.

They make men shun public life and then find a quiet life intolerable. They make men pursue promotion at court, imperial court, and be miserable as soon as they get it. He says it's like some people who fall ill and become very irritable when they are ill.

That's their inner state. And whatever they experience from that inner state, that's how they experience reality. So an example, their wives irritate them because they're ill and their wives irritate them.

They complain about their doctors, grumble about their beds. And for a friend to come is a nuisance, and for him to leave is an offense. So he describes a state of mind that underlies one's perception of reality that is dysfunctional.

And he gives the example of somebody who is ill, but he extrapolates from there and says it is normal for humans to have a similarly dysfunctional state of consciousness through which they then experience their daily life. And to continue the analogy of the sick person who is irritated, says when that person then becomes healthy, suddenly he's happy with everything and everybody is fine again. So something has shifted inside him, makes everything nice and pleasant.

And so the next step is then to look, what is it in us that needs to change and what needs to arise in us? And he calls it the engendering of rationality within us causes this kind of satisfaction and change of attitude towards any way of life. Now, what he calls the engendering of rationality within us, what he calls rationality is really applying one's intelligence to one's inner life, rather than applying one's intelligence exclusively to dealing with external things and conditions.

And that is an amazing discovery. It was for that time, because humans applied, they focused always on everything external. They never, I mean, even nowadays, a large part of humanity still does that.



They apply their intelligence. It's all outwardly directed, as if all the problems that I have were out there, not realizing that to a large extent, I create the problems that I seem to have out there by my unobserved mind. And the unobserved mind means I have not redirected the focus of my intelligence into my state of mind.

The reflective quality has been missing. Unawareness is the term or unconsciousness. And that's how humans generate their own suffering, not only for themselves, but also for others, whoever is around them will suffer.

So this is what he calls the engendering of rationality within us, intelligence directed, not outward, but within, self-awareness. And of course, he knew very well that the inscription at the, one of the most important inscriptions at the Oracle of Delphi, where he was the high priest, is know thyself. Know thyself has two levels.

One is to know the patterns in oneself. And once you have recognized the mind patterns in yourself, which is level one of knowing yourself, then you can go to a deeper level of knowing yourself, knowing who you are, who or what you are in your essence beyond the person. Now he gives a lovely example from history about somebody who lives in that unconscious way.

And this is Alexander the Great, the great conqueror. Once when Alexander was listening to a philosopher, and the philosopher was lecturing on the existence of an infinite number of worlds. And when Alexander listened to this philosopher lecturing on the existence of an infinite number of worlds, Alexander started to cry.

And his friends asked him what the matter was. And he replied, don't you think tears are called for if there are an infinite number of worlds, and I've not yet gained control of just this one? All this, I still haven't controlled this one.

Oh, terrible. A wonderful example of a dysfunctional state of mind. And then he gives another example of an ancient philosopher, Krates, and says, on the other hand, Krates, with his bag and threadbare cloak, spent his whole life joking and laughing as though he were on holiday.

This philosopher's threadbare cloak was, many philosophers would walk around wearing an ugly threadbare cloak, that was a sign that you were not that interested anymore in external things, but more in the inner. So this Krates walked around with one bag, and it's a little bit perhaps like the Chinese Taoist inspired Buddha with a big belly. And so threadbare would walk around with this old cloak and one bag, and his whole life he spent joking and laughing as though he were on holiday.

He had transcended the dysfunctional mind patterns, that is the implication. And so he juxtaposes Alexander the Great in his dysfunctional mind to this philosopher who had gone beyond that. He didn't need to conquer the world, because he had, one could say,

conquered himself.

So then he continues to use that term that he just used, rational intelligence, which is, as I said, intelligence applied within. It is rational intelligence which makes the life one already has both the best one and the most pleasant one. So you become so aligned with the present moment that the life that you have now becomes the best one.

That would be an amazing shift if one could live in that way of inner alignment with what is. It follows, he says, that we should purify our innate well of contentment innate means we are born with it. We should purify our innate well of contentment.

There is in you a well, a spring of contentment. And we should purify it when he says that he means to get rid of the obstacles. We should purify our innate well of contentment and then external things will be in harmony with us too.

There comes a harmony between inner and outer. Whereas many humans live in a state of disharmony between the inner and the outer. It's quite, even nowadays, quite still, quite normal.

Never aligned fully with the present moment, which is life. So it follows that we should purify our innate well of contentment. What a wonderful expression.

And then external things will be in harmony with us too, provided we don't maltreat them and will seem congruent and congenial. There's no point in getting angry with one situation because it is utterly indifferent. The situation is indifferent.

In other words, it is as it is. But success will accrue to anyone who treats the situation he encounters correctly. And he gives a little example that Plato had said something similar.

Plato compared life to a game of dice in which it is not just important to throw something appropriate, but also to make good use of it, however the throw turns out. However the throw of dice turns out, you can make something, you accept that that's what is. A physical illness can make people incapable of enduring either heat or cold.

He says, I don't know if there must be some illness that makes people hard to tolerate either heat or cold. And those who muddle unintelligently through life are like that, in the sense that they get ecstatic at good fortune and depressed at bad fortune. And of course, one goes with the other because the good doesn't last or turns into its opposite.

So you go, oh, which is to say that both good and bad fortune knock them off balance. So you're at the mercy of external conditions. And again, many people still live like that.

Their inner state is at the mercy of external conditions. Intelligent people, intelligent meaning directing intelligence into yourself, intelligent people can invariably find something congruent and useful to themselves from the most forbidding of situations,

even the most seemingly unpleasant situations. If you become aligned with it, something good will emerge from that.

Now he gives an example, which is a little bit humorous on this. The chief thing then to practice and pursue is the attitude exemplified by the man. This man, there was a dog that was pestering this man.

And he picked up a stone and he threw the stone at the dog to drive him away. But instead of hitting the dog, the stone hit his stepmother. And the man said, that's not bad either.

He gives a humorous example of something that we can practice not throwing stones at the stepmother. But what that means is it is possible to change opportunities so that they are no longer unwelcome. Diogenes, the philosopher, was exiled.

He was sent into exile, which was at that time always a dreadful fate because you lost your home and you were not allowed to come back. So you became homeless. So he was sent into exile.

And he says, that's not bad either, uses the term again. That's not bad either because he subsequently took up philosophy. So first he became homeless.

And if he hadn't become homeless, he would not have become a philosopher. So that's how something seemingly evil turns into good. Another famous example, he gives Zeno, the philosopher, who was the founder of what later came to be called Stoicism, a philosophy.

He was a wealthy merchant. He had many ships that transported his goods throughout the Mediterranean. And then things happened.

And he began losing money. And then several of his ships were lost at sea. And then he had just one left from his merchant fleet.

And when he was told that this one too was lost, sunk with all its cargo, his last ship, he said, thank you, fortune, for helping to drive me into a threadbare cloak. And you may remember I mentioned earlier, threadbare cloak was the philosopher's garment. So thank you, fortune, for driving me into a threadbare cloak, which means driving me to become a philosopher.

And of course he did. And he became a very famous and influential philosopher. And so this is just an example to show acceptance of a condition that arises always brings about something else that actually is often far greater value than what has been lost.

Usually things are lost on the outer. And there's something that then arises on the inner that is far more valuable than what was lost on the outer. So that's not bad either, is the

phrase he repeats.

And he says, why can't the rest of us behave in the same way? Have you failed to capture some public position you were after? You can live in the country minding your own business.

Have you been spurned while courting the affection of someone in authority? You can now live a life free of risk and bother. Is your time again taken up with worldly business and worries?

Well, if that's the case, enjoy, I won't quote it all, just enjoy whatever it is that you're doing, do it fully. And then once you live in acceptance, work becomes pleasant and labor non-laborious. Now the next very common thing that another very common obstacle to living consciously and in alignment with what is and not losing one's state of inner peace and connectedness is other people.

So most people are hurt and provoked not only by the flaws of their enemies, but also by the flaws of their friends and relatives. And he says, in most, you will find in this world as you deal with people, you will find insolence, anger, spite, malice, jealousy, hostility. It then these things not only plague those people who have these weaknesses, but these things also annoy and irritate foolish people.

If you get annoyed and irritated by other humans unconsciousness, he doesn't use that term, of course, that doesn't exist then. But if you get irritated at other people's insolence, anger, spite, malice, jealousy, and hostility, then you are foolish. You're not applying your intelligence because that is the state of most humans.

So if you don't accept that, he mentions that again in a little while, you suffer continuously if you don't accept the unconsciousness of the humans around you. And once you accept it, you will regard them as doing what comes naturally to them, as dogs are when they bark. Dogs bark because that's what they do.

And humans behave because that's when they are unconscious, that's what they do. And so you will stop unwittingly being infected by other people's flaws. When you react, you get infected and you lose consciousness.

And another important thing, he tells us not to become discontented or depressed when you realize that you yourself have flawed and defective character. So you discover these things not only in yourself, in others, but you may discover in yourself also there are these unconscious traits. It's not only other humans who are jealous and hostile and whatever.

You may discover them in yourself, but don't become depressed or discontented. It's enough to discover it because that's the, you're beginning to step out of the unconsciousness. Another very common trait that is unconscious in the, they're all things

in the structure of the human mind.

When an unwelcome incident occurs in your life, anything goes wrong, big or small, an unwelcome incident occurs in your life, it is good for contentment not to ignore all the gratifying and nice things that you have, but to use a process of blending to make the better aspect of our lives obscure the glare of the worst ones. Even when something unwelcome happens, there's still large areas of your life that are actually good. One event happens, yes, it may be challenging.

What happens easily is that the unwelcome event, the problem, whatever it is that arises, something that goes wrong in your life, and of course these things happen all the time, they can draw your attention in completely so that this incident takes over your entire life or your entire consciousness. You forget that there's a vast area of your life that is not touched by that. So there's the good still, and that is very true if some, you can verify it for yourself at any moment.

It's like seeing only the one spot in the beautiful carpet, suddenly a dark spot appears there, but that makes up 10% of the carpet or the rug, but it can easily draw your attention in so completely. That's all you see now, and that's all you react to. That's why I often say, take your attention back into the present moment, and you will always find the goodness that is there, not only outside of you, there's the sky, there's you're sitting on a chair, you're breathing, there's the aliveness all around you, there's the aliveness in your inner body that you can feel, and there's your consciousness.

And to be aware of that is, you see things then in a larger context, rather get a distorted view of life. We strain the mind to glimpse the aspects that hurt it, and we force it to occupy itself with thoughts of the things that hurt it. Things that irritate it, by tearing it almost violently away from the better aspects.

And yet the question addressed to the busy body can be transferred to this context and fit in nicely. Why are you so quick to spot someone else's weakness, but overlook your own? That's what Jesus also talked about.

And so we might ask, why, my friend, do you obsessively contemplate your own weakness and constantly clarify and revivify it, but fail to apply your mind to the good things you have? He's full of examples, some of them numerous. Now he gives another example of that state.

You are like the wine seller, a wine merchant, who sells plenty of quality wine. This wine merchant sells plenty of quality wine to other people. Whether this person actually existed or not, we don't know.

He probably did. But for his own meal, he used to taste wines until he found a vinegary one. So he sold the good wines.

But for himself, he tasted until he found really bad wine. And that's the one he would drink with his meal, this wine merchant. And when someone asked one of his servants what his master was doing right now, the servant replied, looking for bad when surrounded by good.

Looking for bad, in this analogy, he's looking for the bad wine. But he's surrounded by the good wine. And so this is an example for how in many humans the mind operates, looking for the bad when surrounded by good.

Does it sound familiar? A long time ago, perhaps your mind operated in that way too. The next statement that comes after this that I just read connects with that.

I actually put this quote on my Facebook two weeks ago. And as a matter of fact, most people do bypass what is good and refreshing in their lives and focus straight on the unpleasant and bad elements. Elements.

Most people bypass what is good and refreshing in their lives and go bad and focus straight on the unpleasant and bad elements. An amazing thing that people do to themselves. Another example, he says it's a bit like when something splits, somebody loses something or something happens.

Many people behave like little children who, when deprived of just one of their many toys, wail and scream and throw all the rest of their toys away. In the same way, if we let fortune distress us just once, then our whining and resentment deprives everything else as well of any benefit to us. Our whining and resentment deprives everything else as well of any benefit to us.

And this leads him now to talk to mention the importance of gratitude. It's not just a new age thing, gratitude. Somebody else discovered it 2000 years ago.

And we must not overlook even things we share with others, but take them into account and be thankful, be thankful that we have life and health and that we walk the earth. Be thankful that we walk the earth. That there's no war right now.

Here there isn't. There's no war, either foreign or civil. But that we may, if we so choose, farm the land and sail the seas without fear.

That the full range of possibilities is open to us from oratory and politics or to a quiet and inactive life. So it's important to appreciate these things and not wait until we don't have them anymore and then appreciate them and regret that we don't have them, but we took everything for granted when we had it. If we do this, then we will not rate and value any of these things highly only once it has been lost while discounting it altogether as long as it is in our keeping.

So, so important to not to have this attitude of taking things for granted, which means

not appreciating the good that's in your life. Only like the wine merchant, always looking for the bad. And that is something embedded in the structure of the human mind.

And this is how still to this day, millions of people make themselves miserable in that way. And they don't know they're doing it. They think it's the world and situations and other people that's making them miserable, not realizing it's their mind.

It's the unconscious mind structure. And connected with that, most people think it is their duty to use their minds to explore and their eyes to examine other people's poems, paintings, and statues in precise and minute detail. They look at poems, paintings, statues, yet they forget their own lives, which could provide plenty of areas for pleasurable reflection.

They constantly look outwards and are impressed by other people's fame and fortune, just as adulterers are by other men's wives, but belittle themselves and what they already have. It's always the other looking at what others have. Oh, I don't have that.

Don't compare yourself to others, he says. What one should avoid is lining oneself up against people who are better off, despite the fact that this is a usual practice. Prisoners, for instance, envy those who have been freed.

And those people envy people who have always been free and never were in prison. And those envy those who have a citizen status that was highly regarded. To be a Roman citizen, not everybody had that.

The green card, I suppose. Envy those with citizen status, who in turn, those who have citizen status, envy rich people, who in turn envy province commanders, who in turn envy kings, who, because they almost aspire to making thunder and lightning, the kings, the kings envy the gods. There's always somebody you compare yourself to.

Consequently, since they never attain things which are out of their reach, they are never thankful for the things that are relevant to them. The only possible description of this is self-mortification and self-inflicted punishment as a result of scrambling for reasons to be ungrateful to fortune. Just find reasons why to be ungrateful to life.

Socrates tells a little story that actually probably happened. Socrates once heard one of his acquaintances remarking how expensive Athens was. Things are so expensive, he said.

A bottle of wine, you pay five drachma. For a purple dyed robe, you pay that amount of money. And for a pot of honey, you pay that amount of drachma.

It's terrible. Everything is so expensive, so he said. And Socrates grabbed hold of him and showed him some grain.

And he says, that costs us five pennies here. Essence is cheap. And then he showed him some olives and said, two drachma for these olives.

Essence is cheap. And then he showed him some simple cloaks, not purple dyed cloaks. Says, this costs 10 drachma.

Essence is cheap. Despite all this, we habitually live out of stupidity with our attention on others rather than on ourselves. So since human nature contains plenty of malicious envy and spite, with the result that the degree of pleasure we feel in what is ours is less than the degree of irritation we feel at other people's successes.

So we take less pleasure in what is ours than the amount of irritation we feel at somebody else's success. That's a very unconscious way to live, but still applies to quite a few millions of people. However, when you look more closely, he says, at those people that you admire, which may be rich or famous or whatever that you compare yourself to or resent, then you must also remove and draw aside the florid veil, so to speak, of their reputation and their facade and get inside where you will notice that they contain plenty of unsavory features and plenty of unpleasantness.

If you look behind the facade of those people, the rich, the famous, you will find lots of unpleasantness. Plenty of troubles accompany wealth, fame, and kingship, but most people fail to notice them under the showy veneer, the glossy surface that you see. Now he quotes something from Homer, the Odyssey, where somebody is told, son of Atreus, you are fortunate.

Your birth was favored by fate and your destiny is to prosper. And that kind of praise is given, he says, for weaponry, horses, and an extensive army, lots of external possessions. But from within come the contradictory emotional cries bearing witness against this hollow fame.

The same man who was told he was so fortunate said, I envy you, he said to an old man. I envy anyone whose life is at an end if he has kept himself safe by avoiding recognition and fame. He uses the term self-love, which really is a word for ego.

And another example of that, it's all really, whatever he's talking about is aspects of ego. The self-love which makes people ambitious and competitive, whatever the situation, and makes them greedily take on everything. They not only expect to be rich, erudite, strong, outgoing, pleasant, and intimate with kings and leaders of nations, but they are discontented if their dogs, horses, quails, and cocks, which were used in sport, are not the best at what they do.

Dionysus, the ruler, was not satisfied with being the most important tyrant of his time, but because his verse, he taught poetry, was worse than that of a famous poet, and he failed to do better than Plato at philosophical discussion, he got furiously angry. He



imprisoned the poet in the quarries and sent Plato to be sold into slavery because they were better at something than he was. So he says to, not everything is for everyone.

One should follow the Delphic inscription and know oneself, and then engage in the single activity for which one is naturally suited, and one should avoid forcibly and unnaturally compelling oneself to envy alternative ways of life, to envy other people's ways of life. So the jars of good and bad do not sit on the threshold of Zeus, the god, but lie in our minds. Foolish people overlook and ignore good things even when they are present, because their thoughts are always straining towards the future.

Yes, their thoughts are always straining towards the future. This is one of the, I so often point it out. We all know it, everybody has experienced it within him or herself, but many of us are now going beyond that pattern.

Now comes another important point that people tend to ignore, that he mentions, and that is the, it is impossible to eradicate and exclude the gloomy aspects from your life altogether, because the world is fitted together by interchange between opposites, light and dark. And there's nothing in human life that only has one side. There's always the other side in external existence.

So to expect not to experience the other side is unrealistic and leads to suffering. There are polarities in this life, and often you can observe you gain something here, but by having gained this here, you lose something there. From my own life, I used to, for years, I did workshops with people, spiritual workshops and talks, 10 people coming together for a weekend, sometimes 15, and I've done workshops with two or three.

One workshop I did, one person turned up. The organizer forgot to advertise it properly, and so I came, I arrived on a Saturday morning, and there was a lineup at the door of one person, and I did it, and there was a lot of interaction, of course, with the people, especially with the one, but even with 10, there was this wonderful connectedness, and I was always available to, even people would come, they could call me up anytime, and I would help them. At some point then, of course, I was only very small scale, not reaching that many people.

Go forward a few more years, and suddenly you have 2,000 people coming to a talk. I get ushered in and out by people. If I linger, I get swarmed and can't get out of the place for an hour.

There's no longer the connectedness with humans isn't there anymore on that level that I enjoyed so much, and then go forward a bit more, comes Oprah, and then can't even sit in private in a coffee shop anymore because people quite often come up and want something or say something. Sometimes it's very nice, but I always loved privacy, and so to some extent, that's lost, but what is gained is an enormous amount, the teaching reaching huge numbers of people, which is wonderful, but what is gained here is lost

there. The personal interaction that was so enjoyable is lost, and anonymity, I loved not being recognized, and for most of my life, nobody paid attention to me.

That was wonderful, and then that changed, so there was a loss of what I loved and valued. It's just recognizing that what you lose here, you gain something here, you lose something, there are polarities in life. If you're extremely strong physically, then perhaps your intellectual faculties may not be so highly developed, or if your intellectual faculties are highly developed, you may be a weakling, or as Arnold called somebody, Arnold from California, you're a puny loser.

You can't have it all. There's always polarities in everybody's life, and so you experience this, and if you then complain that there's something that you don't have, then it's a non-recognition of how life works, if you cannot surrender to the fact that there are polarities in life. Events too contain polarity.

Good and bad are inseparable, but blending is possible to make things fine. In music, there are low notes and high notes, and in grammar, there are vowels and consonants. And musicianship and literacy do not come from disliking and avoiding one or the other extreme, but from knowing how to make use of them all and how to blend them into an appropriate mixture.

Another philosopher, he quotes, says, each of us has two destinies or deities which take us in hand and into their power when we are born. Now comes a poetic expression of that. Earth was there and far-seeing sun, bloody discord and tranquil harmony, beauty and ugliness, speed and slowness, fair truth and dark-locked doubt.

So the potential for this is in everyone. There is the dark and the light, the transcendence is not achieved on the outer level of the polarities. The polarities continue to manifest on the external level.

The transcendence of the polarities, I'm adding a little bit here, the transcendence of the polarities is an inner thing. Within, there is a state of consciousness that is a transcendent state where, and from there, the polarities are allowed to be. You are no longer dependent on them for your state of consciousness.

Anyone with any sense prays for the better things but expects the others as well and copes with both sets by never behaving excessively. Increased enjoyment of wealth, fame, power and status depend on decreased dread of their opposites. If you dread the opposite, you can't enjoy what you have.

So if you have the so-called good now and if you dread the opposite, you might lose it. That will greatly diminish your ability to enjoy what you have now. A strong desire for each of these things, wealth, fame, power, whatever it may be, a strong desire for each of them instills a very strong fear of their departure.

And so it weakens and destabilizes the pleasure as if it were a candle flame in a draft. So the pleasure, there's a candle flame burning but there's a constant draft. Which is the mind fearing the loss that might come.

But there's the possibility of standing up to fortune fearlessly and unflinchingly and say, you are welcome if you bring a gift and no great ordeal if you leave. You welcome the good but you know it's all fleeting, no great thing if it's gone. So if you know that the coming and going, the polarities are always there, nothing in the world of form is permanent, then once you know that, you can actually appreciate what you have or what comes to you knowing at some point it will leave you again.

But if you don't know that it's a world of polarities, then you get attached to that which arises in your life, you attach yourself to it, your sense of who you are begins to depend on it. And then you begin to think, oh, it might, there are all kinds of threats, it may disappear, I may lose it, it may be taken away from me. And of course it will sooner or later because everything is impermanent.

But you cannot then enjoy, so when you identify with it, you are attached to it, the enjoyment is much less because attachment implies fear. You cannot have attachment without the fear of losing it. The very fact that you are attached means your sense of self goes into that, whether it's possessions or status or some function that you have or some role that you play, whatever it is.

The attachment means you seek yourself in it and then there is, even if you are not conscious of it all the time, there's fear underneath of losing it. But there's a possibility of enjoyment without attachment and really that's what he is talking about. And only then is there true enjoyment of things and you no longer fear their loss.

And in this way, you can solely enjoy whatever the present situation is. The next quote, I actually also quote it in the power of now, although at the time I only had it in my head, I didn't remember who said it. So in the power of now, I just said a Greek philosopher said, and this is a famous quote.

And this was an extreme case of acceptance when he was told by a messenger that his son had died, he said, I knew that I had fathered a mortal. I think the way I quoted it in the power of now was, I said, I knew he was not immortal. And I said in the power of now, now we might think this is, inhuman, but we don't know what the state of this man was when he said, I knew he was not immortal or I knew I had fathered a mortal, whether it was somebody who was incapable of experiencing emotion or whether he was somebody who had transcended attachment and gone so deep that he was in touch with that which is beyond death.

And it is quite possible that when he said, I knew he was not immortal, he might have wept at the same time because the loss of the form of his son would have been painful

and he would have been at peace deep within at the same time. And so you can weep and say, I knew he was immortal and I know I always have known it. So there is a deeper dimension present and that is really true inner peace that is not disturbed by outer conditions, which does not mean you cannot feel the emotion of sadness that may be there.

These are wave movements, but you're not dragged along in them. You're not totally controlled by that. It's there and there's a transcendence at the same time.

And Plutarch recommends that we should mirror this person and say, for example, I know that the wealth I have is transitory and unstable. I know that the wealth I have is transitory and unstable. Or I know that I owe my position to people who have the power to remove it.

Or I know that although my wife is good, she's a woman and that my friend is human, a member of an inherently inconstant species. They are all humans and you know they might do certain things that are very unexpected. They are a member of an, this is a quote from Plato, he says, they are a member of an inherently inconstant species.

So trust everybody to do what they do. They might be, they maybe suddenly behave unconsciously. It could happen.

They are inconstant, subject to all kinds of mood swings and different states of consciousness. So once you know that, there is a trust without needing somebody to behave consistently in one particular way because they probably won't. It's again, it's all connected with coming to terms with the constant, the play of polarities in life.

And he says, the point is that if anything happens which may be unwelcome but is not unexpected, this kind of preparedness and character leaves no room for, I couldn't have imagined it or this isn't what I had hoped for or I didn't expect this. And so the heart, and so it stops the heart lurching and beating fast and so on and quickly settles derangement and disturbance back onto a foundation. So you're no longer surprised when the polarities manifest in your life.

Now, again, this all connected. Unwelcome events, of course, a part of the how we experience the dark side. To express the matter generally, while some unwelcome events do by their very nature entail distress and pain, there may be some events in your life that actually physically might involve distress and pain or somebody very close to you may die and there will be some distress and pain.

That's inevitable. Nevertheless, where the majority of such events are concerned, unwelcome events, where the majority of such events are concerned, it is our minds that condition and teach us to resent them. In the majority of cases, it is our mental reaction that creates the suffering.

And therefore, when faced with this second, this latter category of unwelcome events, it is useful to remember this philosopher's quote or line, which says, no experience is terrible unless you make it so. He is implicitly asking the question, unless your body or mind are actually affected, what difference does it make to you if, for example, your father was not an aristocrat, your wife is having an affair, you fail to win some prize or you lose your ride to the front seats in the theater. That was ancient Greece, so highly valued front seats in the theater.

For these occurrences do not stop a man being in excellent physical or mental condition. And where the former events are concerned, the ones which do seem by their very nature to cause distress, such as illness, a friend's or child's death, then he recommends us to remember the line of Euripides, who wrote, I say, poor me, but why? I am only experiencing what it is to be human.

I say, poor me, but why? I'm only experiencing what it is to be human. These are things which we cannot avoid.

This necessity, which is due to corporeality, to having a physical body here, a lot of wisdom that still applies nowadays as it did 2,000 years ago. Let's conclude. We are getting to the end of the essay on contentment.

Let's conclude the way he concludes here. A philosopher, Diogenes, was visiting Sparta, the city-state, and he saw his host busily getting ready for a festival day. And he said, isn't it the mark of a good man to regard every day as a festival day?

And Plutarch adds to this, and a particularly glorious festival too if we see things aright. The world is a temple of the highest sacredness, and nowhere could be more suitable for divinity. And man is introduced into this world by means of his birth, not to view manufactured, immobile images, but to gaze upon what Plato describes as the perceptible likeness of intelligible things which divine intelligence has manifested as containers of an inherent principle of life and movement, the sun, moon, and stars, the rivers with their continuous discharge of renewed water, and the earth with its supply of means of nourishment for plants and creatures.

Life is an initiation into these things, and there is no more perfect way to celebrate them. Life, therefore, should be full of contentment and joy, and we should not make the usual mistake of waiting for occasional days like the holidays sacred to Kronos, Zeus, or Athena for the opportunity to enjoy and revivify ourselves by paying mimes and dancers for bored entertainment. And we don't need to confine our sense of aliveness in our joy to those occasions when we pay dancers and mimes for entertainment or celebrate public festivals.

Every day and every moment is an occasion for the celebration of life. That's a wonderful way to end his discourse on how to live sanely or consciously, how to go beyond patterns

in the collective mind that go back thousands of years. It was thousands of years, most probably, of the patterns that he describes and other teachers that were just operating totally unconsciously.

Everybody was totally in their grip until a few humans came who started directing their intelligence within. And even now, the majority of humanity still lives in the unconscious way, but more and more humans are awakening. And what we've just been talking about is more than just words, much more than just words.

It's part of the awakening of consciousness on the planet. And it's timeless. It's not really a 2,000-year-old teaching.

Thank you. Welcome. Make sure you are here with your attention rather than in your mind and in your thinking.

Then you'll be somewhere else. A helpful thing is to look at this from the point of view of the present moment. Come out of your mind means come into the present moment.

The present moment is this. The surface of this, your sense perceptions, and the depth of this. And that's the real present moment, the depth.

The depth cannot be defined conceptually. It can be pointed to. That's why I'm using words, but it cannot be understood conceptually.

And your mind will not know what I mean when I say depth. Depth, what does that mean? To the mind, it's just another concept.

But if depth can be a signpost, so rather than look at if this is the signpost, you say, depth, what's that? You have to then let go of the concept and sense, so to speak, inside right now, the depth that makes all the sense perceptions and the experience of this moment possible in you, the space in you, the light in you in which this room appears is seen, is perceived, in which this voice is heard. It appears in there, that has no form, but it makes all this possible.

This may be a dream, but even if it is a dream, there's something that makes this dream possible to be. And that's the essence of who you are. And you sense that within yourself.

And that is, when you do that, another way of putting it, you're then sensing what now actually means. So beyond what appears in the now, which is this room and this voice and the flowers and the light, there's something deeper that cannot be understood or conceptualized. We could say it's consciousness itself.

You are the light of the world, somebody said 2000 years ago. You are the light of the world. Now, that's not the you that has a name and a little history.

There's a deeper essence to you, the consciousness that you are. That's the light of the world. So we become aware of that.

And that's becoming aware of the now. It's one with the now, what we call the now. That's the power of now, is to become aware of that directly.

And that frees you from the temporary person. There's nothing wrong with the person. That you are for a while.

But if that's all there is, then it's very frustrating. Little me with a little history and the end will come soon. So you become still and alert and spacious inside.

Nothing needs to be understood at this moment. There's an intelligence there that doesn't need to understand conceptually, which means cut it up into little bits and pieces. That's conceptual understanding.

Oh, they're not small enough. I need to understand more. And then you get a grinder or whatever.

That's called a PhD. But you never get beyond. You just can cut smaller and smaller segments.

And then you need a big microscope. And of course, the ultimate mystery can never be known that way because it cannot be worked out conceptually. So you become still inside and alert, spacious.

The greatest thing is finding the spaciousness inside yourself. Right now, we don't need to know even who you are anymore. But for you are that light, but you don't need to call it light.

You are that space, but you don't need to call it space. Just be it. Of course, what's in the way of that?

Can that be a continuous realization rather than just when you are in a protected environment like here, nothing is impinging upon your senses. Everything is conducive towards this realization. No phone is ringing.

No computer screens flashing saying, give me attention. But then life, you go back into life. And then is it possible to live this realization as a continuous state of being?

Yes, that's the art. That's why you're here, to bring that into your daily, not just to have little experiences. And then you remember them and say, I had a great experience there five years ago.

And then life happened. So as we are here together in the background, there is that presence in the background of who you are. And that's the essence of this gathering.

And that's why we are here. And even while we look at seemingly other things, they are not other things. At the most, we look at the things that tend to obscure the realization of the depths within yourself.

Things that tend to interfere and take you away, obscure it. That is helpful to know what tends to habitually obscure that realization. Because if you don't know it, you get taken over by it without even knowing it.

And just, it has you. There's no recognition of it. So it's very helpful to recognize how it happens that the depths that you are becomes obscured through misuse of the mind, dysfunctional mind patterns and habitual ways of thinking.

It's also wonderful, of course, to be here and occasionally just experience the stillness in between the words without thinking that it needs to be filled with something. And then you can experience the same experience when you're at home. One of these habit patterns of the mind, dysfunctional habit patterns, is that this moment needs to be filled with something.

Of course, you have to do things, but also see if you can experience the spaciousness of this moment. The civilization tells you, you have to fill every moment with some kind of doing. And then you lose the sense of being.

And when you lose the sense of being, no doing is ever enough to satisfy you, except very briefly. Ah, I got that done. And 10 seconds later, the mind said, oh, okay, now I have to think about, oh, yeah, still, okay, all those things still to do.

Oh, and then I got, oh, I got that done. Throughout history, from time to time, there were individuals who recognized, even a long time ago, they recognized the habitual dysfunction of the human mind and they recognized it as a dysfunction. And they said, there is a way out.

There is a way beyond. They pointed to the nature of the dysfunction and they pointed to the way beyond. A very famous person, of course, is the Buddha, who saw that.

He described the dysfunction. He saw that if you live in the dysfunctional state, you suffer. So normal human existence, he said, is suffering.

But there is a way out of suffering. So that's, Buddha is a famous example of someone who had this recognition. One of the most important moments in the history of humanity, not the battles or the kings or the mad emperors or the politicians, that's not.

One of the most important moments in the history of humanity was the recognition on the part of one human being of what's wrong with humans and what's right with humans. So the Buddha said, I teach suffering and the end of suffering, which means I show you how you create your own suffering. I show you how you can go beyond your own



suffering that you create by stopping to create it.

That's the message of the Buddha. And there were others also who had that realization. Jesus had the realization expressed in different terms according to the listener and the culture.

And always a few people here and there had that realization there's a thread running through history and that thread is sometimes called the perennial philosophy. There's a knowing there that surfaces from time to time and then gets buried again and then surfaces again. And a few people get changed by it in history.

But most humans don't understand, except now more humans are beginning to understand than before, not just understand, able to realize the truth of it. And I find it wonderful to discover when I read an ancient book to see, wow, there's already that basic realization there of the dysfunction of the human mind. And this is why in these sessions from time to time, I talk about a book or a teaching that is ancient or well, from some time past.

You may know that I've already spoke briefly about the Tao Te Ching, about the meditations by Marcus Aurelius and about the teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 19th century. But it's always, it's just looking at the fundamental truth through slightly different lenses. That's all it is.

And when we talk about it here, it's not like a university lecture. I don't want to give you knowledge about history. That's what, you don't need that.

It really, whatever we talk about here is about you. So if we talk about this philosophy that few people have heard of called Epictetus, ha, E-P-I-C-T-E-T-U-S, who lived about 2000 years ago. He was born in the year 55, Greek.

We're not really talking about Epictetus. We're not really talking about, we are talking about, it's always about you. So this, I only discovered this really a couple of years ago in his teachings.

I had a book that I bought a long, long time ago in England in a secondhand bookstore, but I never got into Epictetus in that way. The translation, I think, was not very good. And then I got this book and said, wow, this is wonderful.

It's the, it's a good, it's a wonderful translation too. This is the Penguin Classic, Epictetus. Just something that may be helpful to know about him, because how did he get this realization of the, how did he discover it?

What helped him to discover it? Yes, he had one or two teachers, but his main teacher was his personal circumstances and his personal circumstances were as follows. He was a slave.

He was born into slavery. His mother was already a slave. So he grew up as a slave and for part of his adult life, he was a slave.

His body was also crippled. He described himself as lame. Nobody knows exactly in what way.

And there is one ancient source says that his master, the person who owned him, mistreated him and he caused, he broke his legs or his leg or something. And that may be true. So here we have first two factors.

A person who is not free externally and a person who is not free as far as mobility is concerned. A person who has no status in society. And another factor is that his master, who was quite wealthy, lived in Rome and was always at the court, the imperial court of the infamous emperor Nero.

One of the many completely insane emperors. If you read that, any politician is very sane. He's relative to them.

Even the most insane Western, well, there've been some others, but let's not go there. So he also would often, for some reason, maybe he accompanied his master as a servant. He would actually observe what was happening in court.

He was a nobody, but he observed the most important people in the empire, how they behaved, what they did and what happened to them. Of course, the closer you were in court to the emperor, the more dangerous your life would be, especially if the empress is mad. So his teaching was his condition, which one would say would really probably create an unhappy human being.

If you're a slave, you're crippled, and you have to watch all these wealthy and powerful people. So on the surface, that would be enough reason to justify unhappiness or a low opinion of yourself. And perhaps that was the case initially, but he discovered in himself that the cause of his unhappiness was not the situation.

And here we come to one of the two central points of his teaching. The cause of any upset or unhappiness, he said, is not the situation or the condition, but the thoughts that my mind is creating concerning the situation or the condition. And the moment he realized that, there was no more suffering.

He became free from external condition. And that is the second point of his teaching, the possibility for humans to become free as far as their external, internal state is concerned, to become free of externals. That's his teaching.

The two are connected, of course, that any upset arises from your mind and not from the situation, the suffering, the unhappiness, arises through judgment or situations. And we always look to externals, he says, for our fulfillment, and we never find it. And he points

to the possibility of becoming free of that.

And then no matter what the external situation is, inside you have a space of freedom. You are no longer a reactive entity. You are no longer governed by external events.

And that's an incredible freedom. Because if your inner state is always dependent on external events, then you're at the mercy of what happens or fails to happen but should happen. You're at the mercy of what people do and say or should do and say but don't.

You're at the mercy of everything. And so you live in that way. That is unconscious living, dysfunctional living.

And he saw all that through his own condition. So, wonderful thing. Then he became free internally.

And a little later, he was given his freedom externally. And this was not totally uncommon. It happened quite frequently that a slave, after working for 20 or 30 years, the master would say, I'll give you your freedom.

And he did. He became free, and he became a teacher of so-called philosophy, which is very different from what is called philosophy at university these days. This philosophy is intensely vital.

It is teaching you how to live. So he was more a spiritual teacher than a philosopher. But at the time, the word for it was philosopher.

He became a philosopher. And then he moved to Greece, and he set up a school of philosophy, which became quite famous. And people would travel, many Romans would travel to Thetis to learn with him.

And in the end, even when Nero was no longer emperor, the emperor Hadrian actually visited him to pay his respects. The slave become a philosopher. And even the emperor Marcus Aurelius considered him to be one of his teachers.

So his social condition and so on becomes irrelevant there. Marcus Aurelius had certain realizations, perhaps not the deepest possible, but he saw some things very clearly. And he was wealthy and powerful.

And Epictetus saw the same things very clearly. And he had no power and no wealth and wasn't interested. It made no difference.

External conditions then become irrelevant. So he also teaches to use all conditions in your life as something helpful, because you can practice. He compares it to having a sparring partner if you're training for the Olympics or whatever.

Every condition is something you can use. The ability grows in you, the freedom, if you

are challenged by a condition, then how do you approach the challenge? With inner resistance, or are you able to accept what is?

There's great power in that. And then you grow internally, so to speak, in consciousness, the light grows. The more challenges you have, the better.

And he said, to quote one sentence, he said, if you look at tragedies, ancient Greek tragedies, they're really based on certain dysfunctional mind patterns, and that creates the tragedy. You can look the same way at any modern movie or novel. People behave in certain dysfunctional ways, and that creates the drama.

So he says, behold the birth of tragedy when idiots come face-to-face with the challenges of life. Idiot means a person who is unconsciously reacting, and then you create your own drama in life, when you come face-to-face with the challenges of life. But even in translation, this is a very good translation in this book, Penguin Classic.

It is powerful, and it is, I'm sure, more or less exactly how he spoke. And that's wonderful. I'll read a few things to you in a minute.

It still has the power to transform. So a little story in connection with that. You may remember, some of you, in 1992, Ross Perot was running as an independent for President of the United States, and he had chosen as his running mate a person called Stockdale.

And Stockdale, of course, Ross Perot didn't become president, so Stockdale didn't become vice president, but he later became the vice admiral in the Navy. What's important about Stockdale is that in Vietnam, he was a fighter pilot, and he was shot down, and he was a prisoner of war for seven years, four years of which he lived in solitary confinement. And he credits his survival to the teachings of Epictetus.

He had apparently a little book with him of the teachings, and he said that was what kept him alive. When he was shot down, the story goes, and he was ejected from the plane, and then he could see the soldiers coming towards him with rifles. He said he whispered to himself, I'm leaving the world of technology, and I'm entering the world of Epictetus.

And the next seven years were his, the application of the teaching. I will now take a few very short passages and read, and then talk about each one. I must warn you, sometimes he can be quite extreme, and you say, oh, no.

It is not events that disturb people, it is their judgment concerning them. Death, for example, is nothing frightening, otherwise it would have frightened Socrates. But the judgment that death is frightening, now that is something to be afraid of.

So when we are frustrated, angry, or unhappy, never hold anyone except ourselves, that

is our judgments, accountable. When we are frustrated, angry, or unhappy, never hold anyone except ourselves, that is to say our judgments, accountable. An ignorant person is inclined to blame others for his own misfortune.

To blame oneself is proof of progress, but the wise man never has to blame another or himself. So you look to the root cause of where unhappiness arises, where upset arises, not the situation. It's my judgment about the situation.

A vital teaching. And as you practice that, gradually, you become free of attachment to your mind. You gradually disidentify from what your mind is saying.

And gradually, more spaciousness arises in you as you disidentify from the judgment of your mind by recognizing it as a judgment. So that's the work, you could call it. That's the practice.

And life continuously gives you stuff to practice with. Stuff happens continuously. And of course, if you say, why did I want to have some peace and quiet?

But life doesn't allow you. And if you do get peace and quiet, then that becomes the problem. There's nothing happening anymore.

And now he has a little bit of advice of how to approach things so that you become free of the dependency on externals. In the case of particular things that delight you or benefit you, or to which you have grown attached, remind yourself of what they are. Start with things of little value.

If it is a piece of china that you like, for instance, say, I am fond of a piece of china. Because otherwise the mind says, this is the precious thing from so-and-so that I inherited. It's a piece of china.

Yes, but I bought it at Sotheby's. It's a piece of china. Okay, so then because if you discover attachment, say, oh, I'm fond of a piece of china.

When it breaks, then you won't be as disconcerted. Now, the next step here is where you go. When giving your wife or child a kiss, repeat to yourself, I'm kissing a mortal.

Then you won't be as distraught if they are taken from you. Of course, it's a fact. You are kissing a mortal.

You are kissing a mortal, aren't you? Yes, it's a fact. Of course, the mind says, yeah, but why should I remind myself of that?

Well, it might seem a little extreme to you, but just to have the experience you don't have to say that verbally, but to know at the back of your mind that any human being that you're with or yourself, yes, you are mortals. The end could come at any moment. Of course, it could.

I'm kissing a mortal. And now comes a little bit, some other piece of advice. They're all very closely related, of course.

Whenever planning an action mentally, rehearse what the plan entails. If you're heading out to base, picture to yourself the typical scene at the bathhouse. That's where they used to go to place.

People splashing, pushing, yelling, and pinching your clothes. You will complete the act with more composure if you say at the outset, I want a bath, but at the same time, I want to keep my will aligned with nature. So you know what you want.

That's one aim that you have. Of course, you will go there to have a bath, but that's not all. I also want what he calls, keep my will aligned with nature, means not to fall out of alignment with the present moment and the flow of life internally, not to step out of alignment with that, to keep my will aligned with that.

In other words, let's translate it into our terminology. I'm going there to have a bath, but I'm also going there to stay present. So you have an inner aim and an outer aim.

So what he's really actually saying is, don't have just outer aims, because then you get lost in the outer. As you pursue your outer aims, remind yourself that you have also an inner aim that's even more important than the outer aim. That is to stay present as you engage in action and do things.

So that's extremely useful to remember, because otherwise you go into situations and they don't unfold as they should. The mind says, and you get upset. And upset, by the way, is a form of suffering.

Anger is a form of suffering. Now, the egoic mind doesn't know that. The egoic minds have a right to be angry in this situation, but you're suffering.

Suffering? No, I'm not suffering. Now, if you look into your body, then you will know that you're suffering, because if you look and see what the anger does to the physiology of the body, to your heart, to your breathing, to the circulation of your blood, and so on, you realize that your body is actually suffering from this emotional state.

It is suffering. For the first time, they discovered it when they discovered 200 years ago, whenever it was, somebody was shot in the stomach and the hole just didn't heal. So that was the first person, they could peer into his stomach and see when he got angry, the lining of the stomach became red.

The first time they saw that, whoa. And many other things happen in the body. So it is a form of suffering.

And so, two aims. I'm here to get from A to B, but I'm also here to practice presence, to

be present. I'm here to discuss the important business deal, but I'm also here to be present.

The two, you have the inner aim and the outer aim. That's what he is saying. If you forget the inner, you get lost in stuff and it overpowers you and you get overwhelmed and life becomes frustrating.

Lost in externals, as he would say. Externals, all that matters. I want to bathe, but at the same time, I want to keep my will aligned with nature.

Do this with every act. That way, if something occurs to spoil your bath, you will have readied the thought, well, this was not my only intention. I also meant to keep my will in line with nature, which is impossible if I go all to pieces whenever anything bad happens.

If you go all to pieces when something bad happens, of course, you're not aligned with the flow of life. You're not aligned with what is in the present moment. That's the dysfunction.

Wonderful teaching. And it's as relevant now as it was then. Sickness is a problem for the body, not the mind, unless the mind decides that it is a problem.

Lameness too is the body's problem, not the mind's. Of course, he was talking from experience. Say this to yourself, whatever the circumstance, and you will find without fail that the problem pertains to something else, not to you.

In other words, you can be free of problems. Another way of putting it, there is no problem. There only is what is.

And that's your incredible liberation. If you can go through life realizing that there are no problems, there are only situations. If you can live that, then you're a master, living as a master.

There are no problems, only situations. Under no circumstances ever say, I have lost something. Only say, I returned it.

And now another one where you go, oh no. Because it could be misinterpreted as being insensitive. And it has, this has happened historically.

Some people did not fully understand the teaching and they thought it's to do with desensitizing yourself to life and putting up a barrier to life where you go, nothing touches me anymore, like a wall. You sometimes have that with Zen practitioners too. Because it can also, this is certain similarities with his teaching in Zen.

And the way he lived would be very much like a Zen master lives. Just, this is what is. Where's the problem?

Now, some people observe the Zen masters and they kind of, but they can't, they don't live it in the right way, which means they don't surrender to what is. They put up a wall to what is, against what is. And that, this is how this teaching could be misinterpreted and lead to insensitivity.

So this is not becoming insensitive to life or to other human beings. It's to open yourself more to life and other human beings. On the surface, it might look desensitizing yourself.

No, it's opening yourself because it's all to do with acceptance. So there's a huge difference between putting up a wall to life and accepting life. And people who put up an inner wall, it's a misunderstanding.

And of course, behind that wall, they suffer. But of course, they're hiding their suffering behind the wall. I don't suffer.

I'm a Zen practitioner. I have gone beyond. And then the wife says something.

Leave me alone. I'm in control. Don't talk to me.

I'm meditating. I can't deal with it now. Leave me alone.

I need to meditate. I can't meditate. It's acceptance.

So very different. But when you read this, the next thing especially, it could be misinterpreted. There is a deeper, there is a compassion there.

So don't misinterpret. Under no circumstances ever say, I have lost something, only I returned it. Did a child of yours die?

No, it was returned. Your wife died? No, she was returned.

My land was confiscated? No, it too was returned. And then somebody says, but the person who took it was a thief.

And he says, why concern yourself with the means by which the original giver effects its return? As long as he entrusts it to you, look after it as something yours to enjoy only for a time. The way a traveler regards a hotel.

Whatever it is, if it's there, enjoy it, knowing that, of course, it will leave you or you have to let go or it'll decay, whatever. Enjoy, no attachment. And this is real, that where true enjoyment becomes possible only then, because if you're attached, you're not really enjoying the thing.

You make it into a means of something else. Make me happy or make me bigger. I own this.

It makes me feel bigger. You're not really enjoying it. Whenever you see someone in



tears, distraught because they are parted from a child or have met with some material loss, be careful lest the impression move you to believe that their circumstances are truly bad.

Have ready the reflection that they are not upset by what happened, but by their own view of the matter. Nevertheless, you should not disdain to sympathize with them, at least with comforting words or even to the extent of sharing outwardly in their grief, but do not commiserate with your whole heart and soul. It's interesting.

Do not commiserate, which means do not enter their unhappiness. Compassion, I wrote something like similar in the power of now that compassion has two aspects to it. One, you can feel their pain.

This is empathy. You feel the other person's suffering because you have had your suffering. It's probably if you have never suffered, compassion would be difficult.

But if you have suffered, you can feel the other person's suffering also. But for true compassion to arise, true compassion has a deeper aspect to it. In addition to that, there's a depth, and that is the depth that today we started with, the depths within yourself.

If you can feel that depth and there's peace in there, there is a space that is not touched by suffering in you. So in the background, so to speak, there can be that peace. You're connected with that deeper, the depths within yourself.

Even as you empathize and feel the suffering of the other person. So you have the two dimensions. Yes, I feel your suffering, but at the same time, there's a deep peace underlying that.

And then compassion is something that's actually very helpful to the other person. If you only commiserate, as he puts it, if you only commiserate with the other person, you're entering their frame of reference. You're entering their suffering.

There's no help in that, really, to the other person. The help comes if you stay rooted in the eternal within, and then you connect with the other person. That's really what he is saying.

So there's a peace in the background, even as you empathize with the other. And that's healing in the deepest sense. That is where healing flows from the depths of who you are to the other.

And that's where it sometimes happens that the other person suddenly also becomes peaceful, doesn't know why. So it doesn't work through verbalization. You can't say, well, you should have known that your husband or wife was mortal, shouldn't you?

No, that doesn't work. It comes from the depths of who you are. That's the eternal.

You don't need to talk about that. And that's also in any situation where you empathize with others, whatever their problems. It might not be a physical problem.

It could be that they are in a huge personal drama and they want to talk to you about their drama. Are you completely entering their reality? And then, of course, you get depleted after a while.

Some people love that. They say, this is what happened. Listen to me.

Listen. And they almost suck your energy in. And the energy, they need that energy to feed their drama.

So if you enter it, after an hour of listening or trying to figure out some solution, well, why don't you do that? And he said, no, I can't do that. Yeah, but all you could do, no, I've tried all that.

That doesn't work. Of course, they don't want an end to their drama. They are identified with that whole mind movement.

So that doesn't help, except an hour later, you feel, I'm trying to be compassionate and helping. It doesn't work. No, you don't enter their reality completely.

You recognize that as a construct, an artificial construct created by their mind. That's all the suffering. But you don't say that.

You know it, but you don't say it. Because the construct does not like to be challenged in that way. And you would not be reaching that human being.

You would be only talking to the unhappy self, the mental construct. And it is not receptive to that kind of talk. It doesn't want to look at itself because that's the end of it.

He was quite funny too, from time to time. What do we value? Externals.

What do we look after? Externals. So of course, we are going to experience fear and nervousness.

Faced with external circumstances that we judge to be bad, we cannot help but be frightened and apprehensive. Please, God, we say, relieve me of my anxiety. Listen, stupid, you have hands.

God gave them to you himself. You might as well get on your knees and pray that your nose won't run. A better idea would be to wipe your nose and forego the prayer.

Show me one person who cares how they act. Someone for whom success is less important than the manner in which it is achieved. While out walking, who gives any

thought to the act of walking itself?

Who pays attention to the process of planning, not just the outcome? If the plan works, of course, the person is overjoyed and says, how well we planned it. Didn't I tell you with brains like ours, it couldn't possibly fail.

But a different result leaves the person devastated, incapable of even finding words to explain what happened. So not just joke to the result, how you do is more important than the end result that you want to achieve. How you do something is to do with your state of consciousness as you do it.

Is your state of conscious, does it come out of the inner power? That is this deep peace and a powerful energy flow. Your complete attention is on the doing.

Or are you looking to what you want to achieve through the doing? And then the doing is of a totally different quality. It goes, there's no, you get upset while you do things because you haven't arrived yet where you want to arrive.

You look there and you do here. And of course, I call that low quality action. And while you do, you're upset, you're angry with other people, you're blaming and accusing and shouting and angry with yourself, whatever.

Dysfunctional states, psychic disharmony. You're engaged in some big, important business enterprise, but how are you doing it? In a state of psychic disharmony, creating unhappiness all around you.

Yes, but I'm creating something great. No, you're creating unhappiness. Whoever comes into contact with you gets infected by your inner dysfunctional state.

And of course, and then if he does, he or she does finally achieve success, it's totally tainted by the energy that brought it about, karmic. And then he drops dead. So how you do, pay attention to how, not always look to the end result, because how is your state of consciousness now?

When you're driving somewhere, what's your state? What's more important? Your state of consciousness in the moment of driving or arriving where you want to arrive?

Of course, most people think arriving is more important than this moment, because there's something important at the other end. That is not true. What is more important is this moment, because, why?

Because it's the only reality ever, this moment, there is nothing else. So how could it be less important than some imagined future moment? And when that arrives, of course, then some other imagined future moment becomes more important than that one.

This is normal living, but it's insane. These are deep-seated mind patterns in humans.

They are insane, they're normal.

So many humans spend a lot of their lives in states of psychic disharmony or dysfunction, whatever you want to call it. They don't even know what they are doing. They don't know what they're doing to themselves, and they don't know what they're doing to others around them.

And they contaminate the planet, the world, with this negativity. They don't know it. So this is what, when you recognize that, you see it immediately in others around you.

And if you are very alert, you can see it in yourself also. But the seeing is the beginning of freedom. And you see, okay, I'm creating a dysfunctional state right now.

Oh, now you have a choice to step out and become present. When you see you're creating your own suffering, then you have a choice. You can step out of the stream of thinking.

And the mind says, no, I can't step out of the stream of thinking. I just can't stop thinking. I have to think about this.

What's going to happen when this happens? And what if he doesn't? Or that might go wrong and this can...

What if I don't get it and this happens? Oh, God. Oh, God.

And of course, sometimes life does that to you, but it doesn't say no, it goes whack. And then for a moment you're, oh, what was all that? It was all mental fictions.

Nothing to do with this moment, the only reality, this moment. God, I could read the whole book to you, it's so much in it. Let any danger loom and you will discover what we really practiced and trained for.

So what you learned as a spiritual teaching, when you are confronted with danger or challenge, then you can practice, that's the most important part, to apply it in actual life situations in your daily life. Now, if you don't practice because of our negligence, we forever compound our problems and make our situations out to be worse than they actually are, very common. So, for instance, whenever I'm on board a ship and gaze into the deep or look around me and see nothing but ocean, I'm gripped by terror, imagining that if we wreck, I will have to swallow all this sea.

It doesn't occur to me that around three pints will be about enough to do me in. So is it the sea that terrifies me? No, it is my imagination.

Again, in an earthquake, I am prone to picture the whole city coming down on top of me, whereas in fact a single brick is enough to dash my brains out. It's simple. The complexity is never in the present moment.

The complexity of one's problems and one's situation is in here. Not here. It's always simple.

A brick falls, okay. Or at the right moment, you step aside. Now, one important thing here when you become endeavoring to become free of externals and dependency on externals, there needs to be a balance between dealing with externals.

You can't say nothing. I'm not dealing with anything anymore because I'm free of externals. And he talks about this.

Let's read it a little bit. It isn't easy to combine and reconcile the two. The carefulness of a person devoted to externals and the dignity of one who is detached.

The person devoted to externals says, okay, now we need to do this and this and this and this. But without detachment, you don't have the dignity, which is the spaciousness while you do things. So it's the balance between giving attention, but at the same time, not attaching yourself to the external.

This is not impossible. Otherwise, happiness would be impossible. It's something like going on an ocean voyage that was at his time a little bit more hazardous than it is now.

What can I do? Pick the captain, the boat, the date, and the best time to sail. But then a storm hits.

Well, it's no longer my business. I've done everything I could. It's somebody else's problem now, namely the captain's.

But then the boat actually begins to sink. What are my options? I do the only thing I'm in a position to do, drown.

But fearlessly, without bawling or crying out to God, because I know that what is born must also die. I'm not father time. I'm a human being, a part of the whole, like an hour in a day.

Like the hour I must abide my time and like the hour pass. What difference does it make whether I go by drowning or disease? I have to go somehow.

So whatever you can control about externals, you do what you can. This I can do something about. This I can do.

This I can do. Then it begins to unfold. And then in ways that you could not have predicted very often.

And then it comes, you become aligned with what is as it unfolds. Now, there's one or two things that Epictetus did not yet see totally. One is to some extent, your inner state of consciousness and the external reality that you experience as your reality are linked.

They're not totally separate. So he doesn't talk about that. For him, there's the external that we need to accept.

Whatever is beyond our control. But as your inner state changes, your reality also changes. Not in ways that is exact.

You cannot trace everything that happens to some thought or something like that. But your habitual state, your habitual vibrational frequency, emotional state, habitual thinking patterns, they tend to create certain reflections also in the outer. Very simple examples, of course.

If you believe that most humans are dishonest and out to deceive you, then you meet those people all the time. Isn't it strange? Any deep-seated belief that you have about other people or life, it tends to confirm itself in your experience.

If only because perception becomes selective. If you believe that everybody is dishonest, then you will look for... your perception is selective and honest people, you won't even see them.

This is just one example. They could give hundreds of examples. You don't see...

If you look for the bad, you don't see the good. In humans, for example. So your perception becomes selective and then reality confirms to you that all your thought patterns are actually correct.

Yes, they are all evil. They're all dishonest because it becomes selective. That's one aspect.

And also there are certain attractions. You attract people that whatever you're afraid of, you tend to attract that. So if you're afraid of being robbed, you tend to attract that.

I asked a famous person that I met a couple of years ago, do you have a... You don't have a bodyguard? Because I met some other famous people who always walk around with bodyguards.

And he said, well, actually, I'll tell you what it is. I'm sure he doesn't mind. Sting, he said...

So I said, you don't have a bodyguard? No. That would be like walking around with a gun in your pocket and then you attract certain situations where you need the gun.

And of course, that's very true. So that's inner states and outer reality. Another thing he didn't quite see yet as deeply is that thinking can be transcended altogether.

Not continuously, but the ability to step out of the stream of thinking and just be present in that spaciousness. That's a creative state. Creative in the sense of not necessarily

creating a work of art.

Could be that, but it doesn't. Creative in the sense of dealing with life as it happens in this moment in a creative fashion and not a conditioned way. Responding creatively to what this moment requires.

That's creativity. But that does not happen if you apply preconditioned thinking patterns to what happens in this moment, because then you will be judging, interpreting according to your past conditioning, what's happening in this moment. And it's never, that's never it.

You're imposing the past on the present. And so people do that with other humans. They immediately judge them according to their conditioning in the mind.

Can you meet another human without judgment? Well, to be able to do that, you have to stop thinking. Because every thought about that other human being is going to be some kind of judgment.

So is that possible? Can you come to be with and face another human being and look at him or her and listen to him or her and just be a spacious presence while you look and listen to him or her? Yes, you can try it.

Look at me in the same way that I look at you. Do I need some judgment about you? What can that add to the experience of this moment?

It doesn't add anything. It detracts from the aliveness that is in you and that is in me and that is in all, that is all around us. It detracts from that.

Any judgment and reality immediately gets, shrinks into, first as a space and then suddenly you judge the other human being or the situation that you are in. It immediately gets fixed. Like it becomes, it becomes like a piece of ice where before there was flowing water.

And suddenly you pronounce some mental judgment or some mental conclusion. This is how it is. This is how it is.

And the whole flow of water which suddenly gets frozen. And it's hard. Once you have fixed reality in your mind like that, you're stuck with that.

And whenever you meet that other human being that you have imposed that on, you get that rigidity that you might, you cannot allow the human to be other than the judgment that you have imposed upon him or her. And if they display other behavior that completely contradicts your judgment, you won't even see it. Or you will misinterpret that in some way.

So that's, can you be, and this is the, perhaps the essential teaching, can you be

spacious this moment here? Spacious as a presence. Be here as a presence rather than a person.

You don't lose anything. You can pick up the person that you are when you walk out of here. The person will still be there.

Don't worry if you still want it. You can pick up the person with all its history and problems. But for the time being, just practice with other humans.

Let's practice being a spacious presence for them while you listen to them. Oh, or look at them. Don't tell them what you're doing because you're not, it's not a doing anyway.

Just, this is wonderful, not having to judge other humans. This is gradually the ability in you to do that. It's not a doing, judging is a doing, but the language is limited.

The ability for you to do that grows as you practice being with others, not impose judgments. And your mind says, yeah, but you become defenseless. Silly nonsense, you don't become defenseless.

And there are things, if there are obvious things about another person, you see it and you still don't judge it. If a person comes and says, look, I'll sell you this gold watch for \$50. I paid 5,000 for it, I'll take 50.

Say, no thanks. You don't have to say you're a thief, you probably stole it somewhere. Or it's, or you got it in Thailand for \$10 and now it's gone.

You're wanting to sell it to me. No, no thanks. You see, without even saying anything, you see the intention behind it and you still can be compassionate.

You don't say how bad this human is. You just walk away, it's fine. Don't need to, because who knows that human may awaken tomorrow through some drastic event.

And suddenly, if you had judged that person and said he's a thief, well, maybe tomorrow he suddenly awakens and the thief collapses. So that is not who he or she is in their essence. You don't get the essence through judgment.

The essence in the other human becomes obscured and the essence in yourself becomes obscured to yourself. I'll read a little, just a little bit more. Here, first of all, a very extreme one.

Don't judge it, just listen. It's a dialogue, very short. His son died.

What happened? His son died. Nothing else?

Nothing. The ship was lost. What happened?

The ship was lost. He was thrown into jail. What happened?



He was thrown into jail. He's in a bad situation is a stock comment that everyone adds on their own account. So the man I mentioned to you earlier, Stockdale, he practiced these extreme teachings in an extreme situation.

And as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for seven years and he says it worked for him. Acceptance and non-judgments, no more suffering. Physical pain may still be there, but no suffering.

Suffering being the superstructure on top of the physical pain, the mentally created superstructure on top of it. And this is an interesting little piece now about people who are waking up. He doesn't use that term.

I use that term. People who are beginning to wake up, living in presence. The tendency can be for them to be drawn back into unconsciousness with the habitual people that they spent time with.

And he talks about that here. It is inevitable if you enter into relations with people on a regular basis, either for conversation, dining, or simple friendship, that you will grow to be like them unless you can get them to emulate you. So it's either you go there or they come to you.

Place an extinguished piece of coal next to a live one and either it will cause the other one to die out or the live one will make the other reignite. It's true. Since a lot is at stake, you should be careful about fraternizing with non-philosophers.

As he calls it. In these contexts, remember that if you consort with someone covered in dirt, you can hardly avoid getting a little grimy yourself. He's talking to people in whom this is just growing, not to people where it's already fully manifested.

They can associate with anybody. But in people in whom it is growing, the presence is arising, can very easily become obscured again by people you meet. It becomes obscured by a glass of alcohol.

Once presence is firmly there, even one or two glasses of alcohol won't make any difference. You can have it or you don't have it. But while it's arising, it's better not to protect it a little bit like a delicate flower that grows.

I mean, what are you going to do if your friends start nattering about gladiators, horses and sports stars? Or even worse, if he starts gossiping about shared acquaintances. He's good.

She's bad. It's good this happened. It's too bad about that.

What if he sneers, ridicules, and even plays slow down tricks? Do any of you have the musician's ability to pick up an instrument, immediately identify which strings need

attention and bring the whole instrument into tune? Or Socrates' gift in every setting of winning over the company to his side?

Not likely. Inevitably, you're going to adopt the common person's mentality instead. So why are they stronger than you?

Because they talk such garbage from conviction. Whereas your fine talk is no more than lip service. It lacks life and vigor.

Anyone listening to your speeches might well come to hate that damned virtue you keep proclaiming. That's why those fools get the better of you. Conviction is quite a potent and irresistible force.

So until those fine principles take root in you so that you can begin to rely on them a little, I advise you to use discretion in associating with such people. Otherwise, whatever you write down in class will melt away like wax in the sun. Keep out of the sun then, so long as your principles are as pliant as wax.

This is why philosophers say that we should even leave our native land since old habits pull us back and make it hard to embark on new adventures. Also, we can't stand running into people who say, look at him, this so-and-so, trying to become a philosopher, ha-ha-ha. So it's better not to talk really about what you're practicing or learning, as little as possible, unless there's receptivity in the other human.

If there's no receptivity, then it's enough for you to practice, not talk about it. Let's see what else I can find. Here's a funny one.

It shows a lack of refinement to spend a lot of time exercising, eating, drinking, defecating, or copulating. Tending to the body's needs should be done incidentally, as it were. The mind and its functions require the bulk of your attention.

Give attention to your mind. That really means be present with your mind. So you've seen the wake-up call.

Thank you. Vigilance is required. Vigilance is that alertness.

Alertness, especially alert to see what your mind is, what kind of thoughts your mind is producing. A helpful thing also is the alertness to sense perceptions. That slows down the mind considerably and brings you into the present moment, the surface of the present moment.

Sense perceptions are the surface of the present moment. But if you touch the surface of the present moment, you can go deeper from there into the depths of the present moment, which is your spacious consciousness itself. So alertness to sense perceptions is really where the portal begins to open into the present moment.

If you ask, where is the present moment? How do I get out of my mind into now? The simplicity of now, the reality of now, the power of now.

Sense perceptions. Looking, listening, smelling, touching. Oh, you're suddenly back in the now.

It's the surface, but that's a good start. And then you sense, underlying the sense perceptions, the field of presence. You can't, it has no form, but it's there.

That which makes the perception possible. And that's the way to live, is to have that in the background while you deal, either just contemplate sense perceptions or begin to deal with things here. Continuing to sense the presence that you are in the background.

What is presence? This. And then you realize that it's not just inside you.

The presence is within and without. In other words, the universe around you begins to feel more alive. It's almost as if you could sense an aliveness even in the space.

So it's within and without. You sense that aliveness, which has no form. Formless aliveness.

You can't put it under a microscope. It is the precondition for everything. You cannot examine it as an object of consciousness.

Okay, I'm now going to look and examine the aliveness of presence. Who is looking? The aliveness of presence.

I'm now going to look at it. You can't. It is it.

I am it. I cannot look at I as if I cannot. If I make myself into an object that I'm going to analyze or look at, it doesn't work.

The presence is the eternal I. So you can only be it, but you cannot make it an object and say, oh, there it is. It is prior to everything.

So you are prior to everything. In that sense, there's nothing you need to understand to realize who you are. What you need to understand, perhaps, is what prevents you from realizing who you are.

That's helpful to know. But who you are, you can't know. Because it's the eternal subject.

It can never be an object. And so you don't need to understand more about yourself to wake up spiritually, to be who you are in your essence. You are already that.

The only understanding would be helpful to see how that realization is obscured in you. So what you understand is never the reality of who you are. It's the illusion that obscures who you are that you can understand to some extent.

So when you judge another human being, whatever you say about them also tends to be the illusory self that you see there. The mental construct, which either might actually be there or it's a total projection of your mind or a combination of the two. So you have the knowing, two types of knowing, conceptual knowing and non-conceptual knowing, which most humans don't realize yet the possibility of that.

So that's quite a relief that there's nothing you can add to who you are already by some further understanding through the mind. It's by relinquishing, trying to figure something out about who you are that suddenly who you are in your depths opens up now. So this is the same teaching as Epictetus going and taking it a little bit further.

We're in a different time period. More humans are open to it and the need for awakening is much greater now for humanity or to awaken. At his time, it was still a luxury.

Now we have to and that's good. The essence of the teaching is, of course, the freedom from having to think. That's really what it comes down to.

Yes, you don't have to think. You can if you want to, but increasingly you can go through life without an excessive baggage of thought. Suddenly you feel much lighter.

Situations are much lighter. Other human beings are lighter to you. They're not a problem to you.

Amazing things happen as you practice the ultimate renunciation. Renunciation is a religious, spiritual term. And usually it's used with reference to possessions, sexual relations, money, power, renunciation of whatever.

Traditionally, the renunciates in India possess nothing. And that was also for a long time a tradition in Europe in the Middle Ages and early Christianity. In early Christianity, people lived in the desert, renouncing everything.

The desert fathers, as they're called. And that's all very nice, but if the ultimate renunciation hasn't happened, then all that is not even that helpful. If thinking, the compulsion to think, and addiction to thinking, and identification with thinking is not renounced, all other renunciations don't really make that much difference because you would still be attached to whatever thoughts arise in your mind.

And if you've renounced possessions, the first thought that will arise in your mind will be, I am someone who has renounced all possessions. You haven't renounced thinking. So the possessions that you were identified with, which in reality, of course, was only a thought, which means this is mine.

It is part of who I am. That was a thought you had identified with, but now you let go of that. And that's replaced by another thought that you identify with, which is, I'm the one who has renounced.

And all these inferior humans have not renounced. Basically, nothing has changed. Now, you could, of course, have somebody who renounces all possessions and at the same time renounces self-reference to thinking, then that's fine.

And you could also have someone who has all possessions and renounces thinking, and possessions are still there, but don't matter anymore. Or perhaps he'll give them away. Who knows?

But the ultimate renunciation is breaking the addiction to thinking as a dysfunctional, useless activity. And then apply thought when it's needed for certain things. That's fine.

And be free when it's not needed, especially in relationships. A lot of the time, thought isn't needed in a true, deep relationship. Transcendence of thought is needed for a relationship to be deep and true.

Of course, you talk to each other, but the foundation of the relationship must be the space, the inner space in each one, which is ultimately one space, one consciousness. So, practice the ultimate renunciation. Ah, what a relief.

Don't have to think all the time. But don't go to sleep. Stay awake.

Okay.

[Speaker 2] (4:46:29 - 4:46:30)

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (4:46:54 - 7:23:36)

From time to time, I have been sharing with you a book, books that have been dear to me for many years, and books that also I believe will be helpful to everybody. These are books that contain a message that goes far beyond, transcends the time period in which they were written. So, they're books that contain a timeless spiritual teaching or spiritual message that is still as helpful for us today as it was for people at the time when it was written.

So, the oldest book you may remember that we talked about some time ago was the Tao Te Ching, written 2,500 years ago. We also had a couple of books that were 2,000 years old. We talked about Marcus Aurelius' Meditations.

And we talked about the teachings of the philosopher Epictetus. And I've had some feedback from people who found it very helpful. So, the messages are as powerful today as they were at the time these books were written.

So, for today, I have a little treat in store for you, another book. And this time, it's a book that comes to us from the Middle Ages, written about 550 years ago. And that book, for

several centuries, was considered one of the most important spiritual books within the Christian tradition.

But you don't need to be a Christian to benefit from the teaching that's contained in this book. In fact, I'm sure there are many evangelical Christians today for whom the teaching that's contained in this book would be as alien as Tibetan Buddhism. The book is called *The Imitation of Christ*.

*The Imitation of Christ*. Imitation nowadays has a name. It's a negative connotation.

But at that time, all it meant was copying, being the same as. So, the book teaches us to imitate Christ, which means to become as Christ, to become one with Christ or to become one with God. The author of the book was a monk who lived, was born in the year 1380.

But first of all, let me show you the book. This is a deluxe edition published by the Folio Society in England. *The Imitation of Christ*.

And the name of the author is Thomas R. Kempis. Thomas R.

Kempis, which means Thomas from Kempen. Kempen being a small town in northwest Germany by the River Rhine, not far from the Dutch border. So he's generally known as Thomas from Kempis, a Latinized version of Kempen, the town that he's from.

So Thomas R. Kempis was born in 1380 and he lived to the age of 90. Very rare in those times.

And of course, he was a monk because virtually all books written in the Middle Ages were written by monks for the simple reason that nobody else could read or write. Almost nobody else. So the books that were written and read were written and read by monks.

And so the *Imitation of Christ* is a book that contains short chapters. It does, the book does not need to be read consecutively. You can open it anywhere, read a chapter.

There's no buildup, there's no argumentation or anything. Every chapter is simply designed to make you aware on the one hand of that which separates you from your true identity or self, although it doesn't use those words. So you become more aware of your patterns, your inner patterns, the egoic patterns.

And again, of course, it doesn't use the word ego. It uses other terms, as we shall see. And also the book deals with the fact of suffering and how to approach human suffering.

The book, of course, was written originally in Latin and later was translated into the other European languages. The translation I'm using here today is the translation that was made 200 or 300 years ago. It's quite old.

So the English language is ancient old English. And it's been slightly revised in the early 20th century. I believe that this still most faithfully reflects the spirit of the original, that kind of language.

There have been other translations in recent times into contemporary English. But when I looked at one or two, I immediately felt this just doesn't work for this kind of text. So when I read short extracts to you, because that's what we are going to do, I'll read short extracts and we'll then comment.

I believe you will quickly get used to the language. Might be at first a little bit unfamiliar. So Thomas Acampis, The Imitation of Christ.

Let's have a look. Remember, we are not really studying something outside ourselves. So this is not an academic setting.

The beginning of me talking here sounds a little bit as if you were at a college or university, but that's not how we approach it here. We are not really studying a book. We are not really studying a text.

Why should we? What we are doing is we are using this text to look at ourselves. So we look at ourselves through that teaching, because every spiritual teaching is here so that we can direct it to ourselves.

The spiritual teaching is of no interest. The spiritual teaching directs your attention to yourself. It directs your attention in the first place to the obstacles in yourself, the obstacles to awakening, the ego.

And then it directs your attention to the deeper levels in yourself, the spiritual dimension, that which lies once you get through the obstacles so that they no longer obscure your awareness, your awareness of who you are, or simply your awareness is no longer obscured. That's the very purpose of all spiritual texts, no matter whether they are two and a half thousand years old or contemporary, any spiritual teaching. Its only value lies in that, that it directs your attention to that.

It awakens you in various ways. Now, every teaching, of course, has certain limitations that have to do with the time period out of which it comes. So there are certain limitations to this teaching also.

It's a medieval teaching. In some ways, the Middle Ages, medieval times, are very alien to us these days, usually regarded as the Dark Ages. And of course, it is true that there was an enormous amount of superstition and ignorance and cruelty and violence and absolute insecurity at that time.

That's all true. But it's also true that there were some human beings at that time who, despite all this, or maybe not despite, maybe because of the absolute insecurity of those

times, who were able to access the deeper dimension within themselves. And became spiritually awakened.

So they had great mystics. They were called mystics. Of course, they all lived within the structure of the Christian religion and Christian terminology.

Although many of the greatest mystics were regarded with a suspicion by the church hierarchy. It was too dangerous, too alive, too threatening to the collective ego and to the personal ego. So let's look at this now.

At first, as I said, you might find it a little unfamiliar. The language will be strange. But we'll very quickly go more deeply into the text so that the language doesn't matter anymore.

I showed you this deluxe edition just now, which I haven't had for very long. But I'm going to read from this little edition here, which is more or less the same, which is a book that I've had for 25 years. I only recently removed the dust cover, so it looks nice and new again.

Let's start with something simple. A little chapter. I may not read the whole chapter.

It's only a page and a half. But it's called Of Self-Consideration. We may not trust too much to ourselves, for grace and understanding are often wanting to us.

There is in us but little light, and this we soon lose by negligence. Oftentimes, we are quite unconscious how interiorly blind we are. How true this is still today.

Oftentimes, we are quite unconscious how interiorly blind we are. The difficulty he is talking about of knowing, of recognizing your own patterns of reactive judgment, of negativity, egoic patterns, in other words. An inability to be aware that you are still run by unconscious patterns.

And so in many chapters, he directs attention, our attention, away from the external world so that we can direct attention within. As I often say, what really matters at any moment, no matter what you're doing or where you are, what matters, what is more important and more fundamental than whatever is happening outside you is what's happening inside you. If you lose awareness of that fact, then you lose yourself in the outer.

And we'll come to some wonderful little sayings about that in a minute. Oftentimes, we are quite unconscious how interiorly blind we are. We often do amiss and do worse in excusing ourselves.

A very common egoic pattern is to find excuses and justifications. That's easy to recognize in others. They do silly things, unconscious actions.



When you point something out, immediately the ego protects itself. It immediately finds justifications. It's an automatic ego protective mechanism.

As I said, easily recognized in other people, but it needs more awareness to recognize that in yourself. Sometimes we are moved by passion and think it's zeal. Passion here throughout the book is used in a negative sense.

Passion here does not mean what it means in modern English. Passion means reactivity, being possessed by mental, emotional, reactive patterns. And we mistake passion for zeal, which means we mistake it for something that is good, that is enthusiasm and energy that flows into what we do.

We blame little things in others and overlook great things in ourselves. We are quick enough in perceiving and weighing what we bear from others, but we think little of what others have to bear from us. He that should well and justly weigh his own doing would find little cause to judge harshly of another.

This is self-explanatory. If you were really aware of your own patterns, you would no longer judge others harshly. So that is, our task is to become more aware of our own egoic patterns from moment to moment in situations.

The interior, by the way, all the language here, of course, according to the times, is masculine. So when he says man, you have to, of course, include women. Also, the English language, unfortunately, doesn't have a word that includes men and women as the German language does.

He didn't write it in German, but just German has Mensch. Well, Jewish also has Mensch, but with a slightly different connotation. Yiddish, I mean, has Mensch.

So whenever I read man, think human being. The interior man regards the care of himself before all other cares. That means that's what matters most.

Look into yourself. He that looketh diligently to himself findeth it not difficult to be silent about others. He says here the interior man.

The interior man, again, is a term that's used frequently. Interior human being. It means he's talking about the aware human being, the human being at the level of awareness rather than the human being at the level of unconscious thinking.

So the interior man, the interior human being is the level of awareness, who you are at the level of awareness. Because, and that's a vital distinction, most humans who are not awakened, not awake spiritually, live at the level, exclusively at the level of thinking, plus the emotions that are generated by thinking. So that's the interior man is the dimension of who you are at the deeper dimension, the deeper level of awareness.

So that's the shift. You're quite a different being when the shift happens from thinking, the thinking being, we could see the exterior human being to the interior human being. And of course, for many, they fluctuate these days.

Many people are going through an awakening. They fluctuate between being the thinking entity, the thinking being, and being the aware, the awareness, the deeper self. Thou wilt never be interior and devout unless thou pass over in silence other men's affairs and look especially to thyself.

He's giving some advice here of not engaging the exterior man or human being, not engaging, not giving more food, not giving into the mental tendency of wanting to judge the egoic tendency of wanting to judge others. Pass over in silence other men's affairs. If you can let go of the almost compulsion to talk about other people's doings, usually in a critical way, then you're not giving food anymore to that mental habit.

He wrote, of course, the book was mostly written for monks or maybe also nuns, people who lived in monasteries. Nobody else could read anyway. So he refers often to situations that occur in monasteries, but basically it's the same as in everyday life because it's human interaction.

And it's just as challenging to be in a monastery as it is out here in the 21st century. In everyday existence. If thou attend wholly to thyself and to God, what thou seest abroad will affect thee but little.

Abroad in old usage means outside. If thou attend wholly to thyself and to God, what thou seest abroad, outside, will affect thee but little. So as you place more attention on the inner, where you become aware of your patterns and also become aware of God, which is the light of consciousness in yourself, then what happens outside of you no longer has that power over you.

You become, to some extent, free from being controlled by external events that all the teachings point to that. You can respond to external events, but your inner state is no longer controlled by what somebody says or does or by what is happening around you. So, one more time.

If thou attend wholly to thyself and to God, what thou seest abroad will affect thee but little. Where art thou when thou art absent from thyself? Absent from thyself, what's he saying?

When you're not present. Where are you? You're asleep.

Where are you? Where art thou when thou art absent from thyself? So, put this into this teaching.

When you're not, where are you when you're not present? You're not there. You're

asleep.

Unconscious patterns are running you and pretend to be you. Normal existence. And when thou hast run over all things, what has it profited thee if thou hast neglected thyself?

Even if you achieve all kinds of things. If you have not grown in consciousness, what is the point? And in the end, it will make you unhappy.

So, we see the essence here expressed in old language, but in some ways we can recognize that how vital this message still is, because it is about the human ego. Now, a little bit from a different chapter. Very important.

He says, this is sometimes, by the way, sometimes the words seem to be spoken by God. An old version of conversations with God, perhaps. And occasionally there's even a dialogue here between the, perhaps the writer and God or higher consciousness, whatever you want to call it.

So, here it starts with the writer or the reader being addressed by, Son, thou oughtest diligently to aim at this, that in every place and in every action or external occupation, thou be inwardly free and master of thyself, and that all things be under thee and not thou under them. That thou mayest be Lord and ruler of thy actions and not a slave or mercenary. Be someone who stands above things present and contemplates the eternal, who with the left eye regards things passing and with the right, those of heaven.

We'll see that, we'll, now let's look what I just read. Son, thou oughtest diligently to aim at this, that in every place and in every action or external occupation, thou be inwardly free and master of thyself, and that all things be under thee and not thou under them. In other words, don't be the slave of things, of things that happen outside you, of actual material things, things that happen.

Don't lose yourself, as I sometimes put it, don't lose yourself in things. Don't lose yourself in the world. Don't lose yourself in your thoughts, which are also things.

It's all form, the world of form. So there's a love, this lovely image he uses here is, see that all things be under thee and not thou under them. And even nowadays for most people, that is not yet true, not yet the case, they are under the things, they are totally controlled, they give their total attention only to the things in their lives.

I call that life situation. Life situation absorbs your attention completely. What does that mean?

What is the life situation? Life situation is your health, your finances, your relationships, where you live, what you do for a living, your job, all those things, your relationships, your family, all those things make up your life situation. And for most people, of course,

those things entirely occupy their attention.

So their attention or their consciousness is absorbed completely by their life situation, which exists in time. And what they miss, I put it in those words, what they miss is life. What they don't realize is something deeper and more vital than their life situation, which is only accessible in the present moment, which I call life, but you could also call it consciousness, awareness, or God.

And so you miss what really matters, the aliveness of life, the depths within yourself, and you spend a whole lifetime running around the surface of your life. That's one way of putting it. Or as he puts it, things are on top of you.

You are not on top of things. You are under the things, burdened by the things. And he points to the possibility, and I always talk about that, of course, in other different words, the possibility of living in a different way where you become aware of the formless dimension in yourself, the awareness, the presence, the inner space, whatever you want to call it.

And here he has a wonderful image that he uses here. He points to the possibility that you can stand above things present and contemplate the eternal. And you can, with the left eye, regard things passing, and with the right, those of heaven.

Meaning, the art of living is to find a balance between the world of form, all the stuff that make up your life situation, the world of form that continuously changes around you, yes, you have to deal with it, yes, you have to give it some attention. It requires action and this and that. But if that's all, if that absorbs all your attention, you are lost in it.

So he points to the possibility of giving due attention to that dimension that I call the life situation that he calls here things passing. So you contemplate, with the left eye, you regard things passing. That means one half of your attention is on your life situation and whatever it is that needs doing there.

With the right eye, you contemplate the eternal or the things of heaven, as he calls it. Then that means, in any situation, there then there's a dimension of form. You here as a body, a person who, yes, the thoughts that arise, relationships, dealing with this and that, without loss of awareness of the underlying dimension of consciousness itself.

What I sometimes call inner space or what I sometimes call presence. Awareness of that of the background, the spaces, the space in the background of your life, the inner space that is always there in which everything arises and subsides. And that's the essence of every spiritual teaching so that you don't lose yourself in the world, which is your mind.

Without totally denying the world for the time being, you, the form identity, is part of this world. And then there is the essence identity which has no form. This is not something to believe in.

It's something to realize here and now. The moment the mind becomes still, it's there. The moment you totally accept the form of the present moment, you feel a space in the background.

It's there. So what a lovely image. So with the stand above things present, contemplate the eternal.

You are someone who with the left eye regards things passing and with the right, those of heaven. The dance between form and formlessness. The dance between the temporal and the eternal.

Now let's look at a little bit from a different chapter. You can see that it doesn't really matter where you open the book. That's a not ideal for meditative reading.

He that knows how to walk interiorly and to make but little account of things exteriorly does not look for places nor wait for seasons to perform exercises of devotion. The man of interior life soon recollects himself because he never wholly porous force himself upon exterior things. Exterior labor is no prejudice to him nor any employment necessary for the time.

But as things happen, so he accommodates himself to them. Let's look at those two sentences. Very important.

The man, the past, the human being of interior life soon recollects himself because he never wholly porous himself force upon exterior things. A lovely way of putting it. The interior man, again, we had that before.

It means it points to the who you are at the level of awareness. The unconditioned being, the timeless in you, the essence of who you are, the interior being. Soon recollects himself.

The interior man never completely loses himself in the external. He or she soon recollects himself because he never wholly, I'll just put it into slightly more modern English, he never wholly force himself upon exterior things to pour yourself into exterior things, to completely lose yourself in exterior things. You observe it all the time.

When you just, before you see it in yourself, look at other humans around you, how they lose themselves, or the slightest challenge comes in the form of an unexpected setback, something going wrong here or there, some difficult situation, a person not doing what I expect them to do, whatever it is, how quickly people pour themselves into exterior things, and so this thing suddenly becomes of absolute importance.

That's what it means, pouring yourself out into things. Which ultimately, of course, you pour yourself into your thoughts. Every thought that arises takes complete possession of you.

You pour all your attention into that. So you're a continuous loss, a continuous loss. Amazing.

You can see it in others. Just wait, people around you, how, what they do when challenges come. Okay, you've done that.

Now you've recognized it in others. The next step is, oh, can you recognize it in yourself? Do you do that also when you wait for the next challenge?

Do you completely, does it completely draw you out of yourself? And when it does, don't beat yourself up, but even just noticing that that's what's happening is a huge gain in consciousness. So you don't beat yourself up and say, oh, I can't do it.

No, just notice it. Any pattern you notice in yourself means there is some consciousness. There's awareness there.

It's when you don't know it that you're completely trapped in it. And if you don't know it, there's not much you can do except after the challenge has passed, perhaps you can look back and say, oh, I completely lost it there again. And when that, so awareness comes after the challenge, which is even, which is still better than no awareness at all.

And because if there's no awareness at all, even the most unconscious reaction, you will justify afterwards to yourself and to others. The ego is good at finding excuses and justifications. The most absurd justifications will do.

It's an automatic defense mechanism of the ego. So if you're very unconscious, of course, you wouldn't even be listening to this. I'm not talking to people who are totally unconscious because they are not listening.

They can't. There's no space in them to listen to this. Without a little bit of space, at least you can't listen to this.

It's, it would be dreadful, completely meaningless or threatening. And so pouring yourself upon exterior things. And the next sentence here that I'm reading again now, exterior labor is no prejudice to him, nor any employment necessary for the time.

Translated into modern language, whatever you do externally, whatever action you perform, is no prejudice. Doesn't really matter what it is that you do. But as things happen, you accommodate yourself to them.

You go with whatever this moment requires. This moment is not an obstacle to awareness. That's what he's saying.

The, the ego regards to the ego. Anything is an obstacle to awareness. The ego is the obstacle.

So there's a possibility then of accommodating yourself to the present moment. That's what it really is. And whatever action is required in the present moment, you go with it.

This is what's required. And then awareness stays with you. If you react against what is required by the present moment, awareness is lost.

And that means you are absent, not present. If all were right within thee, and thou wert well purified, all things would tend to thy good and thy profit. If all were right within thee, and thou wert well purified, meaning, of course, if all were right within thee, if your inner state of consciousness were clear, present, aware, that's mean, that's what purified means.

All things would tend to thy good and thy profit. Even seemingly negative things will turn to thy good. You will use whatever situation arises, and it will be transformed into good.

Christ for the middle, another expression, can be used to mean to describe that. And so all that happens, a difficult situation, a difficult person, you become more present. You don't lose presence anymore.

You become more alert. Alertness, presence arises instead of reactivity. There's nothing that so defiles and entangles the heart of man as an impure attachment to created things.

Created things is the world of form. An impure attachment to created things is to seek your identity, yourself, in that world of form. And that means suffering.

As he puts it, there's nothing that so defiles and entangles the heart of man. You get defiled and entangled in created things if you seek an identity through this or that, possessions, whatever it is, ultimately thoughts that arise in you. If thou wilt refuse exterior consolations, then shalt thou be able to apply thy mind to heavenly things and experience frequent interior joy.

The joy comes with that as that dimension is awakened in you. What wonderful teaching teaching. Here's a little chapter that is called Of Avoiding Rash Judgment.

And he says, Turn thine eyes back upon thyself and see thou judge not the doings of others. In judging others, a man toileth in vain for the most part he is mistaken and he easily sinneth. But judging and scrutinizing himself, he always laboreth with profit.

Look at yourself. We often judge a thing according as we have it at heart, for true judgment is easily lost through private affection. What does that mean?

True judgment is easily lost through private affection. There is in you, he's saying, I would reduce it to the movement of either fear or desire. There are certain things that you want or fear from another human being and so or situation and you judge through

your wanting and fearing without knowing it.

So whatever you perceive and judge is colored, distorted completely by your inner state, which basically is an egoic state. Your ego has some issue and through that, usually it involves desire or fear, some wanting, and through that it interprets and the interpretation of other humans and situations that involve humans, all situations involve humans more or less, is distorted. So you're really seeing only a reflection of your inner state and you think you're dealing with reality.

Next sentence he says is here, if God were always the only object of our desire, we should not be easily disturbed at our own opinions being resisted. Of course, that's a very, very, very common way of losing consciousness, happens all the time. Just look around or we better look at yourself.

Your opinions, your viewpoints are being resisted and we are easily disturbed, as he puts it, at our own opinions being. The moment somebody resists your opinion, your viewpoint, you are disturbed, upset, defensive, angry. And why is that?

Well, he says here, if God were always the only object of our desire, we should not be easily disturbed at our own opinions being resisted. If we reside deep enough within the dimension of aware presence, we are no longer identified with our viewpoints or opinions. Identified, of course, means we don't seek ourselves in them anymore.

So we are free to put forward our views, viewpoints or opinions without the element of self in them, because we don't need it for our self-identification, because we are already dwelling in our essential identity, which is awareness. We are already here as the aware presence, the space. Out within that space, you express a viewpoint or an opinion.

If it's resisted, it is no longer a threat to who you are. It never was a threat to who you are, but that was the delusion, that you regarded it as a threat to who you are, your identity, because you identified with it. It happens just all the time.

Wherever you look, how quickly somebody resists your viewpoint, challenges it, you're upset one way or another. Which means you're not aware. And here he adds the next sentence, many secretly seek themselves in what they do and are not aware of it.

It's amazing how deep psychological insights he has at a time when really nobody was talking about the unconscious or anything like that in the Middle Ages. Many secretly seek themselves in what they do and are not aware of it. I just talked about that because you seek yourself in your viewpoints and opinions, completely unaware that it's only a thought form.

So there's no, you're not rooted in being. And again, another way of looking at it, as he does in the previous chapter, you lose yourself continuously in things, in form. Next sentence here.



Every sentence is a little jewel. It's so precious. So just to connect with the previous sentence, many secretly seek themselves in what they do and are not aware of it.

They seem also to continue in good peace so long as things are done according to their will and judgment. But if ought happen otherwise than they desire, they are soon disturbed and become sad or angry or whatever. If ought happen otherwise, which means if anything happens otherwise than they desire, they soon become disturbed and become sad or angry.

So you continue in good peace so long as things are done according to your will and judgment. Things you're not being challenged, everybody, but of course that never lasts long. If anything happens other than they desire, they become disturbed and become sad.

Too often, says continues here, too often difference of feelings and opinions giveth rise to dissensions between friends and fellow citizens, between religious and devout persons. Even in the monastery, they do it. They identify with their view and opinions, and then suddenly there's conflict and aggression.

And of course, it was done on a huge scale by the collective ego of the church at that time. Because if you disagreed with the collective viewpoint at that time, you were regarded as a mortal enemy. And if you were lucky, they would put you in prison for the rest of your life.

And if you were not so lucky, you would be burned to death or tortured and then burned. What for? Different viewpoint.

That's the ego. That was a collective ego. An inveterate habit is with difficulty relinquished and no one is willingly led beyond his own views.

Everybody, in other words, is trapped in their own mind patterns, conditionings, viewpoints. Last sentence here in this chapter is, God will us to become perfectly subject to himself and by the love that burneth in us to transcend all reason. Reason, I would say, really means thinking.

God willeth us to become perfectly subject to himself. God, of course, is the formless reality. And by the love that burneth in us to transcend all reason.

To be rooted in the formless is, of course, also love. Because love is not the love of form, because that's egoic view of love. True love is not the love of a form, a human form or any other form.

True love is recognizing the formless in the other, which is God. So all true love is the love of God. But you can only recognize the formless in the other if you recognize the formless in yourself, because it's only through the formless in yourself that you can

recognize it in another.

Recognize not visually, of course, you can't see the formless, but you can sense it. But there needs to be space in you, because the space is it. Presence, space, stillness, alert stillness.

Now let's look at some interesting aspect of his teaching. And that is transforming suffering into awareness. He's not talking about suffering that is produced by the human mind, which for many people is a very large part of their suffering, but true suffering, which could be physical suffering or could be suffering at some great loss, somebody loved one dies or some other great loss, whatever suffering it is.

The suffering, according to the medieval Christian tradition, is called the cross. And Jesus is the prototype of the suffering human. He's the great example.

So, and this is part of a larger medieval tradition. When you suffer, and this is a way of transcending suffering, whether that still works nowadays, perhaps for most people, not. But at that time, it did work for some people.

How many? I don't know. Their own suffering was looked at with reference to the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

So Jesus was the prototype. And then you would regard your suffering as participating in the suffering of Christ. And that was regarded as a kind of spiritual practice.

It's not, it's actually can be a very powerful thing because if you use that archetype of suffering that Jesus represents, human suffering, Jesus stands then for all humans. He's a representative of humanity, of all humans. And if you can feel that at the time, it was possible for many, probably, to feel they were suffering with him, participating.

And that led to letting go of all resistance. And of course, letting go of all resistance, when you can say yes to whatever arises in this moment, which could be suffering, that's the, you immediately transcend the ego. So he, in various chapters, he shows us how to go beyond suffering by embracing suffering.

Even, and this is, nowadays, we would regard it as a little perverse, but it is part of a very ancient tradition, not only in Christianity, but also in Hinduism, for example, to even welcome suffering. Now, I'm not asking you to go there, but that is, that was a way for hundreds of years. In India, it's still practiced by some, quite a few yogis.

Basically, they not only welcome suffering, go one step further. Don't go there, please. I'm just pointing out what, what is possible, what humans have done, although the modern humans find it hard to understand.

Not only, so, not only accepting suffering is one stage, and it's beautiful, because what

else can you do if it's not mind-generated? If it's mind-generated, you have to look at your mind, how it generates suffering. But it could be physical suffering, accepting suffering, welcoming suffering, even, and then some would go so far as almost, or actually, to create suffering for themselves, as yogis do in, some yogis do in India.

The famous thing, the famous cliché, you sleep on a bed of nails. You create, and they've come up with all kinds of things to create suffering. And there's, it is doubtful that this will truly free you, because if you create suffering in order to achieve transcendence, there's a huge danger that instead of achieving transcendence, you achieve enhancement of the ego.

But let's look here at what he calls the Royal Road of the Holy Cross. So cross, or Jesus on the cross, stands for suffering. Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below than the way of the Holy Cross.

Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee, and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly. And so thou shalt always find the cross. For either thou shalt feel pain in the body, or sustain in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

Sometimes thou shalt be deserted by God, at other times shalt be afflicted by thy neighbor. And what is more, thou shalt often be a trouble to thyself. Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort, but as long as it shall please God, thou must bear it.

For God willeth that thou learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, and wholly submit thyself to him and become more humble by tribulation. The cross, therefore, is always ready and everywhere awaiteth thee. Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest, for wheresoever thou goest, thou carryest thyself with thee and shalt always find thyself.

Turn thyself upward or turn thyself downward, turn thyself inward or turn thyself outward, everywhere thou shalt find the cross. If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee and bring thee to thy desired end, namely to that place where there will be an end of suffering. If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee and loadest thyself the more, and nevertheless thou must bear it.

If thou fling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another and perhaps a heavier." So, beautiful writing. It resonates, of course, also with the teaching of the Buddha, especially here where he says, you cannot escape the cross, whithersoever thou runnest, wheresoever thou goest, thou carryest thyself with thee and shalt always find thyself.

And no matter where you go and what you do, then something, there will be something to cause you suffering. Again, he said, thou shalt feel pain in the body or sustain in thy

soul tribulation of spirit. You are afflicted by your neighbor or afflicted by your trouble to yourself.

Of course, the Buddha teaches that and speaks of the universal fact of dukkha, which also means suffering. Although it's not just suffering, it embraces other things. The Buddhist term dukkha embraces any kind of unsatisfactoriness, non-fulfillment, misery.

All that is dukkha. So the Buddha says, no matter where you go or what condition you're experiencing, you will always find the element of dukkha in any situation, in any condition. And that's very true.

Any human who has lived long enough will find no matter where you go, where you live or what you do, there's always this element of suffering or unsatisfactoriness arises sooner or later. Relationships. So Buddha teaches then what he, wherever you go, you will find dukkha.

And Thomas Arkampis in the Christian tradition says, wherever you go, you will find the cross. Now, because people have not truly understood the teaching of the Buddha, especially people who only try to analyze it intellectually, therefore call Buddhism a negative or life-denying teaching. And many people nowadays would also regard Thomas Arkampis in the medieval spiritual tradition as negative.

But the fact remains, it is actually true. Anybody can verify it in their own life. However, something important needs to be added to the Buddhist teaching or the spiritual teaching of the, a Christian teaching of the cross.

This is only true until you realize the essence of yourself as beyond form, or as Buddhism puts it, you realize the truth of anatta, as it's called in the Pali language. You realize the truth of no self, that there is, you only suffer if there is self-seeking in the world of form. If you're identified, then you're identified with the world of form.

Then there's dukkha. Because the Buddha says everything is impermanent in the world of form, anicca. Everything is devoid of self, anatta.

And if you seek yourself in that which is impermanent, that's dukkha, suffering. But if you don't seek yourself in that which is impermanent, because you have realized your essential self, which Buddhism calls no self, as spaciousness, which Buddhism calls emptiness, which Jesus calls the kingdom of heaven, then you don't need the world of form anymore to give you your sense of self. You can have a loose relationship with the world of form.

Allow it. Play with it. Give it its due.

Don't expect from it more than it can give you, which isn't that much. You don't have unreasonable expectations of the world of form. Because if you have unreasonable

expectations of the world of form, which includes other humans too, please fulfill me.

No, nobody's going to do that. Well, they may try. You might have an egoic marriage contract.

Say, I fulfill you, you fulfill me. That sounds good. But try it for a while and you'll see it doesn't work.

I'm sure many of you have tried it. So the cross, there's one way you can use. Suffering as it arises, and there accept what is in the midst of suffering and give up resistance.

And suddenly, it's one way of finding that which is beyond form. You suffer and you willingly, you can practice it if you have an illness or whatever, completely accept what is. Don't accept the idea of illness.

I've said that before somewhere. Accept simply whatever you feel at this moment. Bring acceptance to it.

Whatever arises in this moment, it is as it is. That frees you from the world of form. If you accept the form completely, it frees you from form.

That's a miracle. If you don't accept the form of this moment, you are trapped in a reactive movement, which means you are more trapped in form. So surrender means accepting whatever arises.

And that's the cross. And he says here, if you accept, then the cross carries you. You don't carry the cross anymore.

Isn't that amazing? Then the suffering turns around and suddenly becomes an opening into the realm of the transcendent through surrender. And in the ancient Christian tradition, that is a lesson of the human on the cross who says, not my will, but thy will be done.

So we see how the really seemingly very different spiritual traditions really all point to the same, the same place, take us to the same place. If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee and bring thee to thy desired end, namely to that place where there will be an end. End of suffering, though here there will be no end.

Here means in this dimension, in this dimension only, there will be no end. You will continue to experience challenges. The difference is they no longer turn into suffering.

As long as there is suffering, you can practice surrender and through surrender, the ego gets eroded. Through complete acceptance, the ego gets eroded. Sometimes all at once, sometimes gradually.

And now he comes to the, the most extreme expression of this teaching. When thou

shalt arrive thus far, that tribulation shall be sweet to thee and thou shalt relish it for the love of Christ, then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth. As long as suffering is grievous to thee and thou seekest to fly from it, so long shall it be ill with thee and the desire of flying from tribulation shall pursue thee everywhere.

So if tribulation shall be sweet to thee, then immediately you find paradise on earth. Now that just means a complete yes to what is. That's pretty drastic.

You welcome whatever is. But basically that's the, is at the bottom of all teachings. And immediately inner transformation happens.

And then the ego is gone. And there's a beautiful saying here from Thomas Akempis. I'm just taking this one quote, one sentence.

For the Lord bestows his benediction there where he findeth vessels empty. Empty. If you're empty, now doesn't that sound like Buddhism?

If you are empty, you are blessed. God bestows his benediction there where he findeth vessels empty. Now Buddhism doesn't mention God, but basically it's the same.

It's the emptiness. The absence of ego is you become spacious inside. You already always were spacious, but didn't know it.

But now you know it. And then suddenly the blessing comes. Peace comes.

Joy comes. It's there. Let's look at one more chapter.

It's quite short again, just less than a page. Of the inconstancy of our heart and of directing our final intention to God. Trust not to thy feeling.

Whatever it may be now, it will be quickly changed into another. As long as thou livest, thou art subject to change even against thy will. So as to be sometimes joyful, at other times sad.

Now at peace, again troubled. At one time devout, at another indevout. Sometimes fervent, at other times sluggish.

One day heavy, another elated. But he that is wise and well-instructed in spirit stands above all these changes, not minding what he feels in himself, nor on what side the wind of instability bloweth. But that the whole bent of his soul may be made conducive towards the due and wished for end.

For thus one and the same and unshaken can he stand, directing through all this variety of events the single eye of his intention unflinchingly towards me. God is speaking here. And the purer the eye of thy intention is with so much greater constancy will thou pass

through these diverse storms.

So this is a wonderful teaching again. We experience fluctuating inner states, mental and emotional. As long as thou livest, thou art subject to change even against thy will.

Sometimes you're joyful, at other times sad. Now at peace, then troubled. One day devout, another indevout.

Fervent, sluggish, heavy, elated. But he points to the possibility of not minding what you feel in yourself. Those are the words.

Not minding what you feel in yourself, nor on what side the wind of instability bloweth. Not minding what is. Inner states becoming, in other words, the aware witness of your fluctuating inner states.

Then you can allow them to be. They no longer, I would say, they still arise, but they no longer create suffering. It's only when you are totally engaged in the inner states, identified with the inner states, that's suffering.

When you are the aware presence, you allow this feeling to be there, whatever it is. One day you are sluggish. One day you are elated.

One day you are this or that. But you are, in other words, you are rooted in the inner spaciousness, the aware space, and then allow the states to come and go. And again, this is basically Buddhist teaching.

It all comes together. So you see the oneness of that. All spiritual, true spiritual teachings.

And so in that dimension, you are no longer dependent on what happens or doesn't happen, either outside or inside. So what a wonderful teaching. I could read many more chapters to you.

I almost feel compelled to read one more, two more. So let's just a few more lines. God himself, herself, itself speaking, which is the unconditioned consciousness, the universal intelligence that is, it dwells within all life forms and is, of course, also beyond all life forms.

If in anything thou seekest thyself, thou presently faintest away within thyself and growest dry, principally therefore refer all things to me, for it is I that have given thee all. Consider each thing as flowing from the sovereign good, and therefore all must be returned to me as to their origin. Out of me, both little and great, poor and rich, as out of a living fountain draw living water, and they who freely and willingly serve me shall receive grace for grace.

But he who would glory in anything else beside me or delight in any good as his own

shall not be established in true joy nor enlarged in his heart, but in many ways shall be impeded and straightened. Therefore thou must not ascribe any good to thyself nor attribute virtue to any man, but give all to God without whom man has nothing. Again, to attribute anything to yourself is a delusion, because all, whatever energy you have, whatever the life that you are, the consciousness that you are, and whatever comes out of that consciousness that you are as a creation, something that you do or achieve, where does it all come from?

It all comes from the one source of all life. It's not yours. Nothing is yours.

Because the moment you say, this is mine, you've created the illusion of separateness from the source, and then the flow from the source becomes greatly restricted. The moment the illusion of separateness arises, the flow from the source of all life becomes narrower and narrower, it's not coming through anymore. Of course, Jesus said the same when somebody called Jesus good man or whatever somebody called him, and Jesus said, do not call me good.

There, none is good but God alone. So he was very much aware of that, not attributing anything to yourself, and then power can move through you much more freely. It all comes from the one source.

And so then you can, without the ego, but ego means there's a self, you attribute something to yourself, and that's me. Without that, you can be a full expression of universal intelligence in whatever form it wants to take. Let's end with reading me again just these few lines here.

Out of me, both little and great, poor and rich, as out of a living fountain draw living water, and they who freely and willingly serve me shall receive grace for grace. There's only God. That's the basic truth.

There's only the one. And you are it. Thank you.

Something I don't normally do is to share with you a book and there are some books that I've loved for many years that are powerful, timeless, and you may have seen, already started by sharing with the Tao Te Ching, the ancient Chinese book of wisdom written 2,500 years ago and just as powerful as it was then, even in translation. And I don't know if you've seen the second one was the Ralph Waldo Emerson, not that old, 19th century, also containing timeless, powerful, spiritual truth. Books like that are more than books.

They're, I feel, almost life energy fields and they have a life of their own. After giving birth to the first time, the power of now, I had this feeling that I had given birth, it came through this form and suddenly it went off into the world and it had a life of its own. Not that much to do with me anymore and it went into the strangest places and caused all over the planet reaching people who were ready.



At least one copy of the power of now even reached the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. Somebody told me that he was on a yacht and it sank and the book went down with it. So when we talk about a book and I have chosen another one for today, let's bear in mind that we are not at a college or university, that's not our approach.

We're not actually studying the book as such but the book is more than a book. It consists of powerful pointers towards spiritual truth, awakening, realization. So we're looking through the book, not at the book.

We're looking through the book at ourselves because every significant book is about you. That applies even to literature. If you read an important, deeply alive work of literature, it's about the human condition, always in the story, hidden underneath the story is a truth about the human condition, which is you.

And the book is powerful because it is about you and even more directly so in a spiritual book. So that's really what we are looking at through the book at ourselves, at the truth of awakening or at dysfunctional mind patterns in ourselves, becoming aware of that. So there is running through, as far as these books are concerned, there's running through history, this thread of spiritual realization or truth that has been called by some people, I don't know who coined the phrase, perennial philosophy.

Perennial means everlasting, always there. Philosophy, not in the modern sense of abstract solving of puzzles, but the original meaning of philosophy was about change in consciousness, about how to live sanely in this world. And so the book I've chosen for today, again, a book I've lived with for many years.

This book was written approximately 1,900 years ago. And the amazing thing about the author of this book, one quote from this book is in the power of now, I'll tell you in a minute what it is. The author of this book is highly unusual.

He belongs to the rare species, extremely rare species that are sometimes called philosopher kings. That refers to people who have worldly power, but are not unconscious. Rare combination.

Worldly power and a high degree of consciousness, perhaps not absolutely awakened state, but a very high degree of consciousness and self-awareness. And that's extremely rare. So I've seen it, for example, I remember when I lived in London, I would often go into the British Museum where there's a huge and wonderful section on Egypt.

And there are particularly two gigantic carved granite stone heads of pharaohs of Egypt one a man and one a woman, huge size. And when I saw them for the first time, I felt both of them emanated such serenity that that must be the depiction of somebody who is in a state of absolute peace. There was no doubt because even the stone statue emanated that serenity with a much more powerful, more powerfully than most Buddha

images, although occasionally you get beautiful Buddha images like that too.

They both have a very slight smile on their face, just a hint of a smile and wonderfully serene gaze. And I actually took photos of these two and I had them on my wall for many years. But now the photos have gone the way of all world or earthly things and been lost or dissolved.

But that's fine for the time being. If you ever go there, they're still there. The stone, the original stone heads and I'm sure you will find them easily.

Just walk around the British section in the Egyptian section in the British Museum on the ground floor and you will very easily find them. So philosopher king, those were pharaohs, they were the rulers, but at the same time, perhaps they lived in that state of awakened state, perhaps not completely, but conscious, very conscious state. And the book I've chosen for today belongs to the same, written by the same kind of being, a Roman emperor called Marcus Aurelius, who was emperor for about 20 years between approximately the year 160 and 180 after Christ.

And while he was emperor, he wrote that book. He's considered one of the most just and wise emperors in a huge number of emperors, many of which were, I could almost say, completely crazy, completely insane, with occasional interludes of sanity, but he perhaps was the most sane. This unfortunately was not the case as far as his son was concerned, who became emperor after him, who was one of the worst.

So the awakened state is not easily transmitted genetically. If you have seen the film *Gladiator*, the emperor in that film is called Commodus, and that's his son. And in the film, actually, Marcus Aurelius appears at the beginning of the film, and if I remember correctly, in the film he is killed by his son.

I don't think there's historical evidence for that, but it's quite possible that he did kill his father. The actor is so good who played Commodus, the mad emperor, his son, I believe his name is Phoenix, Joachim Phoenix. He's so good.

That was the first time I ever saw this actor, and whenever I see him in some other role now, I think, oh, there's the mad Roman emperor. Now, the book that he wrote was not meant to be a book and was not meant to be published. It was to himself, and for a while that was the title.

When later it was published, it was called *To Himself*, and then later the title became *Meditations*, and that's what it's called nowadays, *Meditations*. And so when he died, people found this collection of notes to himself, and all just very short notes, very rarely more than half a page, and often just two or three sentences. So they found these notes, and people must have realized that they were deeply significant, and they were published.

In other words, copied by hand, of course, and then distributed to some people. And for about 300 years, 200 years, 300 years, gradually the book became better known. The book couldn't spread as quickly as it happens nowadays because first there was no print, and there was no opera.

So. And then what happened was, what started then were the so-called dark ages, when very few, the Roman Empire collapsed, the destiny of all form. The Roman Empire collapsed, the so-called barbarians took over, smashed everything up.

And for 1,000 years, the book disappeared. Nobody heard of it. And miraculously, one or two copies survived somewhere.

Nobody knows where, in a monastery perhaps, because the only people who could read and write during those 1,000 years were monks in monasteries. They kept alive the literary and philosophical tradition. And 1,000 years later, somewhere the book reappeared, and somebody read it and said, wow.

And they started copying it again. And ever since then, it's been, when it spread, it has been known to people, and many people found it meaningful, and many people still do. So that's amazing how the life of a book, it can disappear for 1,000 years, and suddenly reappear again and be just as alive.

And now here we are in the year 2009, looking at a book that was written 2,000 years ago, and it's alive for us, as you will see in a minute. It is alive. It is vitally alive.

Imagine the equivalent of this would be in the year 4,000 people reading *The Power of Now*. Now this is an ideal book if you don't want continuous reading, but either read it in bed or wherever you are, open it, read one entry, two entries, one page. They're all unrelated entries.

The book is divided into chapters, but it's meaningless. Originally, it didn't have chapters, but the publishers these days thought, well, every book must have chapters, so we call it chapter one, two, three, but it's meaningless. It has some themes that recur, but otherwise, there's no division into subject or themes.

It's just thoughts that came to him, insights, realizations, and reminders to himself of how to live. So that probably means that he didn't quite live the truth all the time. He was not totally conscious all the time.

He needed to remind himself of the truth. So these pointers that he wrote down were to himself, and not he didn't realize that anybody would find these pointers powerful and meaningful. Anybody who had even the slightest opening to the truth within, they would then recognize the truth that's there in the book.

Amazing. So I'll show you here what I have. I have two books here.

One is an old edition and an older translation, Penguin Classic. It probably looks different these days. It may have a different cover.

I've had this book maybe for 25 years. For a while, it disappeared too. This, I didn't.

And then I got it again. I had it stored somewhere. This is the Meditations Penguin Classic, an older translation.

This was sent to me one or two years ago. I received it in the mail from the publisher, said, we've just published a new translation of Marcus Aurelius. And we realized that you quoted him in *The Power of Now*.

And I think you would like to have a look at it. A very different translation by Gregory Hayes. The publisher is The Modern Library.

I love them both. This translation is more formal and serene. This translation is more modern and impactful and concise.

And this one is... So in a book like that, as with the Tao Te Ching, where I also gave you sometimes alternative translations, it's good to look at two different translations to have two different approaches to the same truth and see how different a translation can be. Now, you might think since he was a Roman emperor, he would have written this book in Latin, but he didn't.

The original is written in Greek. Every highly educated Roman would be virtually bilingual. And Greek was a language in ancient Rome of culture and philosophy.

And so naturally, when talking about these subjects, they would use the Greek language. So it's a translation from ancient Greek. Marcus Aurelius lived at a time when Christianity had just come to Rome.

But he doesn't mention Christianity. Apparently, there's one mentioned somewhere. I haven't found it yet.

But they believe that a later copyist put that in. He was aware, he must have been aware of Christianity. And many people have said that many of the truths that he speaks of seem to show a Christian influence.

But that is not an external influence. I believe it's something that came from within. Because the time of Christ was a second wave of spiritual awakening coming.

The one, well, not perhaps the second, perhaps third or fourth. One very powerful wave was, as I meant at some other time, the time of the Buddha. And Lao Tse, who wrote the Tao Te Ching, was an enormous influx of spiritual truth.

It seems to come in waves. The awakening of humanity comes in waves. There comes a

wave of...

Suddenly, it flows from within. It flows into humans. And then the wave subsides.

And unconsciousness returns. Not completely, perhaps. But it's going...

Ooh. It's like somebody... Let's say humanity is a single human being that is asleep and dreaming.

And this human being doesn't wake up like... This human being wakes up out of the dream world. A lot of the dream is nightmares.

It goes... And dreams on. But perhaps not quite as deeply.

And then comes another... Oh. Self-awareness.

And then it's overtaken again by sleep. Can't keep my eyes open anymore. Another thousand years of the Dark Ages.

And then something shocks it. Perhaps some deep... Some suffering.

Some enormous collective pain. Like something hitting you. Wake up!

Life says, wake up! And you go... In our case, I believe that that hit by life on you that wakes you up was the 20th century.

The madness of the 20th century. The dreadfulness of history. 20th century history.

This dreadful suffering was... Like shaking you awake. And this is why from a larger perspective, even the dreadfulness has its place.

Because ultimately, it's part of the dream. The dreadfulness of the madness of it all. The 20th century.

Even that has its place. And perhaps we would not be here... It's almost...

Don't want to say something like that. But perhaps we would not be here if it hadn't been for the enormous suffering. Self-inflicted by humans on humans.

And so that served perhaps as an awakener. And this is why we are now experiencing another very powerful wave. Perhaps the last.

Perhaps leading to a permanent awakening. A permanent shift. I'm not absolutely sure that this wave is the last one that leads to a permanent shift in consciousness.

So that from now on, humanity or large section of humanity can live consciously without losing it again. However, if we look at history, we see that, yes, it seems to come in waves. Perhaps this is a wave.

Perhaps even this will have to subside again. Perhaps there will be another period of darkness. And then finally the shift will happen.

That's possible too. It doesn't really matter. There is an awakening here happening now.

That's all we need to know. And to be part of that. So that it happens through you.

That's all that matters. And it's never lost. No awakening is ever lost.

Even though humanity may go back to sleep for a while. Who knows? And yet, no gain in consciousness is ever lost.

Then the sleep won't be quite as deep. And there will always be some humans who stay awake. Even if collective sleep should return.

Hopefully not. Would be dreadful. But you can see there is the sleep state.

You can even when you watch the television. CNN. Partly there are some people who are very unconscious still.

And occasionally there are some people who bring in, who seem to be more awake than others. Much more. I'm not mentioning any names.

Now, Marcus Aurelius was not, you might have said, well, he must have had a great life. He was a Roman emperor. Lived in a life of luxury.

And well, he didn't. He spent many years fighting. It was a tradition for many emperors not to stay in Rome when there was a war.

They would actually go out and lead the soldiers into a battle. Maybe not personally with a sword. But they would be present where the Romans were defending their empire from the barbarians in the north.

And for years he lived there. Living through the agony of Germany's winters. And no central heating, of course.

And he was getting old. And not that many pleasures. And during that time, he wrote this book.

In *The Power of Now*, I mention one entry from the book. And I haven't looked at it recently. But I may actually have misquoted it.

Because when I wrote *The Power of Now*, I didn't have any books with me. So I caught it from memory. But the correct quote, I believe, from this is, and this is the old Serene Translation.

I didn't have this one then. It says, Love nothing but what comes to you woven in the

pattern of your destiny for what could more aptly fit your needs. Love nothing but that which comes to you woven in the pattern of your destiny.

For what could more aptly fit your needs. The pattern of your destiny is the totality in which you move. And whatever you encounter, whatever situation you encounter in life, in this moment, the only moment there is, must be part of this web of the pattern of your destiny.

Where everything is connected with everything else. This is why I sometimes say, I speak of the inevitability of the form of the present moment. It happens because why is this happening now?

It could not happen otherwise. The entire history of the world has brought about the form of this moment, obviously. It has produced the form that this moment takes.

And that is the web, that is the pattern. And to go against that, is insane, to not accept it. So one theme that runs through it is to live in a state of non-resistance to what is.

Oh, so amazing that... He didn't call it non-resistance to what is, but that is the basic message. And that reoccurs many times in the book.

So let's have a look perhaps at one or two. The last few days I've been re-reading it and marking a few entries that I want to share with you. And I love it.

I can't put it down. And it's not because I can't put it down because there's some what's going to next in it, because there is no next. There's only this entry and then this entry, because it's so alive.

Oh, so much. That's good. I don't know where to start.

Let's start with a very, very short. To shrug it all off and wipe it clean, every annoyance and distraction and reach utter stillness. Don't need more than that.

Shrug it all off, wipe it all clean, every annoyance and distraction and reach utter stillness. That's the first and the last lesson. Now just, what does this serene translation say about this?

It's more poetic, but less powerful perhaps. Oh, the consolation of being able to thrust aside and cast into oblivion every tiresome intrusive impression and in an instant be utterly at peace. Now, as you notice, this translator uses stillness.

This translator uses peace. Of course, it is the same thing. Peace is inner stillness.

So according to your inclination, some may prefer one translation. Others may prefer the other. It is only the form in which it comes.

The essential truth behind the form is the same, of course. And that is so you may love. We talked previously about loving the form, having an affinity for the form and calling that love and recognizing the essence, which is love.

So you might have an affinity with one or the other form of this book, one translation or the other, that has nothing to do with it. The essence is the same. So that's fine.

It's just form and essence. Some forms are easier for others to use, for some people to use than others. So it doesn't really matter which one.

But that ability to shrug it all off and wipe it clean, every annoyance and distraction and reach utter stillness, that possibility is there at any moment to say, I'm just returning completely to this moment, which means you shrug it off, you wipe all distraction, all mental accumulations completely back in the present moment. No problem. There's no problem here now.

That in itself is a meditation. If you can remember that when you are not at peace, the possibility of returning to the present moment, you can call it like, usually one lives, one's intention is here in the past and here in the future. And so the focus of your consciousness is either there in the past or here in the future.

But it's not where life is happening, which is here. And you're interpreting the life that's here through the past or through fears and expectations about what you want, future, past and future, clouding your vision of what is. Of course, it's confusing.

You get confused. And so you separate. Ah, you wake up out of the dream.

The present moment is actually fine. Yeah, but what about tomorrow? Well, when it comes, it'll be the present moment.

The ability just to see how unproblematic the present moment is. The problem arises from something else, past and future. Where is past and future?

In thinking. Here, there are one or two translations. I've changed a word or two to make it even, well, in my view, better.

Nothing that goes on in anyone else's mind can harm you. Nothing that goes on in anyone else's mind can harm you. Nor can the shifts and changes in the world around you.

Then where is harm to be found? In your tendency to see it. It refers to harm.

In your tendency to see harm. Stop doing that and everything will be fine. Let the part of you that makes that judgment keep quiet.

Even if the body it's attached to is stabbed or burned or stinking with pus or consumed



by cancer. Or to put it another way, it needs to realize that what happens to everyone, bad and good alike, is neither good nor bad. That what happens in every life, lived naturally or not, is neither natural nor unnatural.

Important phrase here is, let the part of you that makes that judgment keep quiet. The judgment that harm has happened. Without that, all you're ever faced with is the isness of the present moment.

The rest is an interpretation or a story. And it is in your power to let go of the interpretation which is unnecessary and simply be with what is. Don't impose a story on it and strengthen your identity by fighting what is.

It's about living in a different, from a different consciousness. People try to get away from it all, to the country, to the beach, to the mountains. You always wish that you could too, which is silly.

You can get away from it any time you like, by going within. Nowhere you can go is more peaceful, more free of interruptions than your own soul. In an instant's recollection, and there it is, an instant's recollection, and there it is, complete tranquility.

And by tranquility, I mean a kind of harmony. So keep getting away from it all like that. Renew yourself.

Getting away from it all, that expression, many people want that. And of course, ultimately, the only way to get away from it all is to go within. Now, in the little book, Guardians of Being, which some of you may have seen about dogs and cats, there's a little cartoon where the man walks with his dog and says to his dog, oh, isn't it nice to get away from it all?

They're walking out in the country. And the dog says, I suppose so, although I don't have that much of an all to get away from. Another theme that runs through it is impermanence, the fleetingness of all things.

And from the point of view of the practical man or woman, they would say, I don't want to hear, this is very negative, to be reminded of death or of the end of things. The practical man or woman says, no, I just want to get on with life. I don't want to be reminded of death.

And yet, eventually, it'll catch up with you. And then it's a bit late. And if you've been identified with form all your life, and finally the end approaches, it's very painful, extremely painful when the forms around you begin to collapse and you become aware of the imminent dissolution of your own form, it's dreadful.

And the dimension of depth cannot develop in you as long as you're identified with form. If you do not see the fleetingness of all forms, you remain shallow. So this is why I wrote

somewhere, any civilization that denies death, that doesn't want to hear about it, like Western civilization still, doesn't want to hear about death, denies death, is shallow.

And the amazing thing about impermanence is that the realization of impermanence opens up in you the dimension of space or stillness when it is not resisted. This is why many spiritual teachings point to the fact of impermanence of all form as a device, as a teaching device. Because the moment you see that, how fleeting everything is, and don't resist it, something in you feels suddenly very spacious and peaceful.

And this could happen even if you go to, here in the West, you can't do it. But if you go to India, you could go when a person dies in India, the body is taken very, just a few hours after death, because it's hot, you can't keep bodies for very long. The body is taken to the cremation grounds, out in public, hot, dreadful, in public.

The body is taken to cremation grounds and there's a huge fire and is placed into the fire and all the relatives, they watch the body burn. And that, of course, many cry, but it is a deeply spiritual thing to watch the destiny, the fate of all forms, to actually see it, not as an abstract truth. You can have an abstract truth, it's, yes, everybody dies eventually, and when they die, the body dissolves.

Okay, that's an abstract, you don't really know it. And if you're a young person, up to the age of 30, perhaps, okay, you've been told, or you think, you know, you are going to die one day, you don't really believe it, that you are going to die, it's not me. Maybe at the age of 30, for the first time, for a second, an inkling comes to you that you may be mortal.

Or as I heard, I read an interview with a young person and she said, in her 20s, she said, oh, I'm not worried about death because by the time I reach that age, they will have invented something. So, soon you will be ashes or bones, a mere name at most, and even that is just a sound, an echo. The things we want in life are empty, stale and trivial, dogs snarling at each other, quarreling children, laughing and then bursting into tears a moment later.

Ordinary human existence, dogs, dogs snarling at each other. Children, quarreling children, laughing and then bursting into tears. And then they die.

So, he constantly reminds himself of the fleetingness of life. And why is he doing that? That must have given him inner peace and stillness.

And again, why is this happening? Why can, why potentially can the realization of fleetingness give you inner stillness? Because something in you, that that in you which recognizes the birth and death of forms is not form, it's consciousness.

So, there must be something eternal or timeless and non, something that is not form in you to recognize formlessness. I said somewhere in the book, if the whole world were

blue, you wouldn't see any blue. In order to see blue, there must be something that's not blue.

So, in order to recognize the fact of impermanence, and to see there must be something in a faculty in you that is not part of that impermanence, and that is timeless, and that is consciousness itself. So, when you see the form, you disidentify, when you see the form dissolving, and this could be in your life with a simple thing, like some kind of loss. It doesn't have to be death every time.

Some kind of loss in your life. It could be the loss of a job, the loss of your investments, the loss of your partner, of someone close to you. Perhaps they leave you.

They may not die, but it's the same. Separation, the loss of certain life circumstances, the loss of your home. Many people in these economically difficult times are experiencing, for example, the loss of their home.

And again, home, your house where you live, is something important in the world of form that you identify with as part of who you are. It is very painful to be deprived of that, but potentially, there is here the possibility of disidentification from form. And there, suddenly, you find yourself, although most people in this country, you lose their home, most, some do, but most people eventually find some other home.

Most. And even if you don't find another home and you find yourself on a park bench, this could be a moment of complete disidentification from that which you thought you needed to sustain your life, or the forms, to psychologically sustain your sense of who you are. You've lost that.

And what are you left with then? What's left after you've been deprived of the forms that gave you your, what you thought was a foundation for your life? When life takes away the forms that you thought were the foundation of your life, what is left?

The life that needs no foundation, that is the foundation, the formless, the essence. And this is why many people, many people have to go through loss to awaken to that. Some of the happiest times in my life I spent on a park bench without a home was beautiful.

No, I'm not saying this will happen to you. Some people read the introduction to *The Power of Now* where I talk about having no home for a while and sitting around on park benches and they close. Oh no, I don't want to go that way.

Dealing with people, that was one of his things. He often reminds himself of how to deal with other people. Don't be irritated at people's smell or bad breath.

Now he's using really, he's using that as a metaphor for something else, being irritated at the behavior of people. But he uses that, don't be irritated at people's smell or bad breath. What's the point?

With that mouth, with those armpits, they are going to produce that odor. And then he argues with himself. The next line says, but they have a brain.

Can't they figure it out? Can't they recognize the problem? And then he answers, so you have a brain as well.

Good for you. Then use your logic to awaken his. Show him, make him realize it.

If he'll listen, then you'll have solved the problem without anger, which means point out, don't react to other people's unconsciousness. They, whatever behavior they manifest comes out of their state of consciousness. This is why he says, with that mouth and those armpits, have to produce that odor that just follows.

Why be angry about that? Why react? Use, you have a brain, which means you can, instead of asking them to be conscious, be conscious yourself.

And then he says, use your logic to awaken his. Now, when he uses the word logic, we have to, it's deeper than what we know as logic. According to the philosophy of which he was a part, which is called stoicism, there is such a thing or no thing that is called logos in Greek.

And logos is often translated wrongly, I believe, as the word. Logos is translated as the word, for example, at the beginning of the gospel of St. John, where it says, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. Now, what he translates, what in St. John is translated as the word is the Greek word logos. This is the origin because the gospels are written in Greek. The word logos says, in the beginning was the logos and the logos was with God and the logos was God. That is, logos, the fact that the writer of the gospel of John uses the word logos means that he was familiar with Greek philosophy.

So he uses a term that was already at the time of writing, was already 400 years old, logos, and incorporates that into the Christian teaching. So we have Greek philosophy coming into Christian teaching. But the logos in that school of philosophy, and that is why it's part of the perennial philosophy of spiritual truth, the logos really is consciousness.

The logos, they're regarded as an intelligence that pervades the entire universe, that animates and pervades. It is also the intelligence that makes it possible for you to think, but it is deeper than thinking. It is intelligence that sustains the body and created the body.

It is this intelligence that underlies the whole. That is the logos. And the teaching of Marcus Aurelius or what he reminds himself of is to live at one with that intelligence.

Consciously, in conscious oneness with that intelligence, with this consciousness itself.

So when he says use your logic, it means you live in alignment with that universal intelligence. And you cannot live in alignment with that universal intelligence if you resist life, if you resist what is, if you complain about life, if you have a quarrel with life, the present moment.

And there's a beautiful, if I can find it, piece on that. I can't find it. But I know it more or less from memory.

He says, if you quarrel with your circumstances, you are like a tumor or an abscess in reality, in the world of form. You become like a tumor or an abscess if you quarrel with what is internally or out aloud. You're like an abscess on the world.

And many people, of course, if you observe human life, many people live like that. They live in, if not continuous resistance to circumstances. Circumstances consisting of the other people, what people say or do, what people don't say, but should have said, or don't do, but should have done, and so on.

All that is circumstances. And the habitual state of consciousness is to quarrel with circumstances, with what is. And so he describes that, that you make yourself into an abscess.

You are out of alignment. It's like some growth. You may not realize how widespread that state of consciousness is, that lives, even if it's just 50%, that it's half your life living out of alignment with life.

And for many people, it's more than 50% of their life. There are many people who, almost 100% of their life, are quarreling with circumstances, internally or out aloud. Whatever is in the present.

They're complaining. Isn't that amazing to live like that? And he saw the insanity of that.

So do you want to be an abscess? And of course, most of you don't do that anymore, except occasionally. And this is a good moment for a humorous interlude.

Somebody gave me a card. A card that he gave to his wife. And he showed it to me.

And I liked it. I don't know why he gave it to his wife. And he showed it to me.

And I loved it so much. And I said, oh, I'd love to have that. And then he got one for me.

It's all about complaining, of course. So the card shows this woman. It's apparently from a TV show called Saturday Night Live.

And this woman looks very unhappy. And the card says so. I don't know if you'll be able to hear it.

It's a little digital recording. She's going to say something when I open the card. The card says so.

When you open the card, it says, how are things with you? And then she tells you how things are with her. I suppose I have to hold to my microphone here.

How are things with you?

[Speaker 2] (7:23:37 - 7:23:48)

I'm depressed, I guess.

[Speaker 1] (7:24:11 - 8:12:19)

Now, the reason why it's funny is because it's so close to the truth of many people. Just a slight, maybe very slight, exaggeration. Not that much.

Choose not to be harmed. And you won't feel harmed. Don't feel harmed.

And you haven't been. This, again, is about not creating a story in your mind. This is what he did to me.

This is what he did. And then it goes on. He did that.

Talk about it. Think about it. This is, you're creating a substitute reality.

You're creating a huge superstructure, mental superstructure, on top of the simplicity of what is. If you don't do that, it's almost as if nothing happened. Even if somebody cut off your arm, if you don't complain, if you don't make it into a story, nothing much happened.

Don't. So, choose not to be harmed, and you won't feel harmed. It's not, what he's really saying is, do not create a superstructure of story making.

Impose it on reality, and believe that to be more real than the simplicity of what is. It's amazing. And again, of course, this is still a lesson that most humans have to learn.

Impermanence. Little point, again, to impermanence. He is reminding himself of, he says, the age of Vespasian.

Vespasian was an emperor about 80 years before him. The age of Vespasian, for example. People doing the exact same things.

Marrying, raising children, getting sick, dying, waging war, throwing parties, doing business, farming, flattering, boasting, distrusting, plotting, hoping others will die, complaining about their own lives, falling in love, putting away money, seeking high office and power. And that life they led is nowhere to be found. Or the age of Trazan.

Trazan lived 40 years before him. He was emperor then. The exact same things.

And that life, too, gone. Survey the records of other eras and see how many others gave their all and soon died and decomposed into the elements that formed them. All gone.

But most of all, run through the list of those you knew yourself. Those who worked in vain, who failed to do what they should have, what they should have remained fixed on and found satisfaction in. This last sentence, what he means by that is, who worked in vain, who failed to do what they should have, what they should have remained fixed on and found satisfaction in.

Their entire attention was on the world of form. He's really saying their entire attention throughout their lives was on the world of form. And he gives this whole list.

And of course, the list that he gives, marrying, raising children, doing business, flattering, boasting, plotting, putting money away, is still exactly the same these days. No difference from 2,000 years ago. And so the entire attention is on the things, the stuff around you.

And this is why he says they worked in vain, because what they should have remained fixed on, or at least there should have been a balance in their life of what I previously called the formless and the world of form. What I express sometimes in, you may remember this, the formless and the world of form. It's your life to have a balance in your life.

And for most people, there is no balance. There is only form. And that is such a waste.

They are not focused on the eternal. They are unaware of the eternal within. Jesus talks about that also when the famous story of the two sisters, when he visits a house, Martha and Mary.

And Martha is concerned about getting everything ready. Let's see, you have to do this and that, and the cooking has to be done, and this has to be done. She's agitated and stressed.

And Mary is sitting there listening to Jesus. And Jesus says, Martha says to Jesus, please tell her to help me. She's just sitting there.

I've got so many important things to do. Jesus says, well, she has chosen only one thing is necessary, and she has chosen that one thing. When Jesus says only one thing is necessary, what he means is only one thing is absolute, is absolutely important.

Everything else may be important, but it is only relatively important. Your job, your relationships, your home situation, your financial situation, your health situation, whatever you have in the world of form is relatively important, yes, but not absolutely

important. But what determines whether your life ultimately has meaning or not is whether the dimension of depth, the stillness, the spaciousness, the formless essence, whether you realize that within yourself or whether your life is consumed completely by the world of form, which includes the thinking mind.

Then your thoughts, this is primordial form. Thought is primordial form. Your thoughts then consume your entire consciousness and the things of this world, which are really all become thoughts in your head.

You don't have a relationship with your car or your house. What you really have a relationship with is the mental concept of car and house. And so ultimately, all the things of this world are your mind.

And you don't even know whether there is such a thing as a car out there. Maybe all the cars we see in LA are just in your mind. Philosophers have spoken about whether what we perceive out there is actually there.

And nobody can know for sure is there even such a thing as an outside. Amazing question, but let's not go into that. And ultimately, it actually is helpful as the Course in Miracles recommends that you consider everything that you see as being inside you.

This is almost as a kind of spiritual practice. And that's quite an amazing thing. If everything that you see, if you can practice it for a day or half a day or an hour, that everything inside is actually inside you.

What, that obnoxious person is inside me? And of course, if it's inside you, it changes. Ultimately, the division between inner and outer is not really there.

But let's put that aside. Let's stay with the practical. Again, a little entry about the story making in your mind, giving things a significance that they don't really have.

Like seeing roasted meat and other dishes in front of you and suddenly realizing this is a dead fish, a dead pig, or that this no longer exists. Noble vintage, whatever it's called, is grape juice. Of course, it is fermented grape juice.

And the purple robes, the Roman emperors would wear purple robes, and the purple robes are sheep wool dyed with shellfish blood or making love. Something rubbing against your penis, a brief seizure, and a little cloudy liquid. Well, that destroys many illusions.

Perceptions like that, latching onto things and piercing through them so we see what they really are. That's what we need to do all the time, all through our lives, when things lay claim to our trust, to lay them bare and see the truth. How pointless they are to strip away the legend that encrusts them so that you're not deceived by the world of form.



So good to see that when you see advertising. It doesn't mean you can't enjoy things, but not get into some illusory realm. They inhabit some illusory mental realm because then the world will take you over and devour your entire consciousness when you don't look through things.

Amazing. Our inward power, when it obeys nature, when it says nature, by the way, it again really is one of the many ways in which you can translate logos. So in alignment with consciousness itself, our inward power, when it obeys nature, reacts to events by accommodating itself to what it faces, to what is possible.

It needs no specific material. It pursues its own aims as circumstances allow. It turns obstacles into fuel as a fire overwhelms what would have quenched a lamp.

What's thrown on top of the conflagration is absorbed, consumed by it, and makes it burn still higher. Obstacles, challenges, when they are not avoided but faced, when they're not resisted internally, it uses the words reacting to events by accommodating yourself to what you face as a consciousness rather than rejecting what you face. Then whatever challenge comes into your life, and I say the same in *The Power of Now*, it becomes fuel for your, as I say, it becomes fuel for your consciousness.

Any difficulty in your life, any challenge in your life, if it's not avoided, denied, rejected, complained about, saying life shouldn't be happening to me, it's accepted as it happens, then it becomes fuel for the flame of consciousness. And you grow, consciousness grows, comes through you more and more. And then also at the same time, not only does that free you from the suffering, the self-inflicted suffering that is there when you reject what is, does not only free you from suffering, it also brings a power in that deals then with the situation.

So use whatever challenge comes into your life, you use it as a kind of fuel for the flame of consciousness. And that is done through surrender to what is. And some people need more of that than others.

If you choose presence in your daily life, you may not need the drastic challenges. You remember the, like life shaking you awake. If you wake up and stay awake, life doesn't need to shake you awake.

If you go to sleep continuously and the universal impulse of consciousness is of course towards awakening, then life needs to shake you. Let's look at something from the poetic translation. There's a type of person who, if he renders you a service, has no hesitation in claiming the credit for it.

Another, though not prepared to go so far as that, will nevertheless secretly regard you as in his debt and be fully conscious of what he has done. But there's also the man who one might almost say has no consciousness at all of what he has done, like the vine

which produces a cluster of grapes and then having yielded its rightful fruit, looks to no more thanks than a horse that has run its race, a hound that has tracked his quarry or a bee that has hived her honey. Like them, the man who has done one good action does not cry it aloud, but passes straight on to a second as the vine passes on to the bearing of another summer's grapes.

How to live without ego, claim I did that for you, or claiming credit, but something is done and you move on, like nature. So, and then he sometimes has a dialogue with himself. So now he writes, according to you then, we should rank ourselves with things that act unconsciously.

Is that how we should live? Like the vine or like a horse that has run its race and then forgets about it, doesn't say I did that. And then he replies, exactly, yet we should do so consciously.

So be like, be as much in alignment as the things of nature that live unconsciously, live in the same kind of alignment with life as the vine, as the horse, as nature, but do that consciously. And that's an interesting point because that is the alignment that you naturally live in before the mind takes you over and before the mind creates separation between yourself and reality, yourself and the world, yourself and other people. Before that happens, you live in a natural alignment with what is.

So there's nobody, there's no ego that says, I did that. There are still some humans whose mind is not highly developed. They would perhaps be called retarded.

Some humans, their mind is not developed enough yet to have an ego. And those humans also can live in that simplicity. I've pointed out before, if this is, for example, in the film, Forrest Gump, you have a human who would be considered virtually almost on the brink of retarded.

And he does, first of all, life always gives him what he needs. Things come to him. Secondly, even when he accomplishes great things, for example, he goes to Vietnam, he saves many people out of the, carries them on his, he says, well, nobody there to claim credit for it.

He hasn't got an ego. He just tells the story of what he did. That's what happened.

That's what I did. There's no ego there to say, I did that. And so that's the pre-egoic state, like nature.

So this is what he talks about, is we can live like that, but consciously. That's the next stage. And this is the reason why the simpleton or the fool and the enlightened person have a lot in common.

And why sometimes the simpleton or the fool or the enlightened person can be

mistaken. The enlightened person can be mistaken for a fool, and the fool can be mistaken for an enlightened person. The latter being the case in the nice film with Peter Sellers, *Being There*, where the fool is being mistaken for a highly unconscious being.

They are close. The human being in whom the ego has not yet arisen can be used more easily by the logos, to use that term, by universal intelligence, because it's not the power of the logos, which is consciousness, it's not obstructed by the ego. And this is why there are many ancient legends and myths, mythology, where the fool has an important mission.

That's an archetypal motive in mythology and literature. The fool can do something that the great heroes cannot do. And again, it's the power of the egoless state, even if it's pre-ego.

As the most recent example of that, of course, is the *Hobbit*, *Lord of the Rings*. The simple guy, little and not particularly intelligent, only he can do this important, accomplish this important mission, not the powerful heroes, because they have an ego. But our destiny is to live in that alignment with power, consciously.

And when that shift happens, your life becomes empowered by the universal consciousness, the logos, and it manifests through you, one way or another. Then the sense of I, of the doer, I have to do that, goes. And that's good news and bad news.

Then suddenly, you achieve things when you have become free of ego, if not 100%, maybe 90%. It's enough for you to achieve great things. If you become free of ego, you achieve things that before the ego would have done anything to get you there.

But of course, you couldn't do it with the ego. And when you've achieved it, unfortunately, the sense of I did that isn't there. So you don't get that satisfaction.

You get a satisfaction of being in alignment with power, but you have no personal satisfaction. Oh, that's a pity. My ego would have liked to have written the power of now at the age of 25.

I did that. Of course, I couldn't have. The ego can't write that.

It's not in alignment with power, the power of now. The ego is a denial of the power of now, so it can't write the power of now. I'll just open it at random now.

There's so much good in here, it's so wonderful. Don't let your imagination be crushed by life as a whole. Don't try to picture everything bad that could possibly happen.

Stick with the situation at hand, which means the present moment, and ask, why is this so unbearable? Why can't I endure it? You'll be embarrassed to answer.

Then remind yourself that past and future have no power over you, only the present. And

even that can be minimized, which means the power that the present circumstances have over you, even that can be minimized. Just mark off its limits.

And if your mind tries to claim that it can't hold out against that, well then, heap shame upon it. The simplicity, if you keep to the simplicity of the present moment, can I deal with this situation? Always.

The power is there. Can I deal with what might happen tomorrow? No.

You don't have the power to do that for the simple reason that it doesn't exist. It's not here. Will I be able to deal with?

No, you won't. You can only deal with the present. The power can only come into the present.

You don't need to have it for tomorrow. Oh, sorry, I forgot that you were there. So you see that the perennial philosophy of the spiritual truth runs through from the most ancient times to now the same truth coming through different words, different forms, it's there.

The truth of awakening, living in alignment with the greater intelligence, the truth of surrender to the present moment, the truth of letting go, of imposing stories on reality, the mind, not live in the mind, compulsive thinking, waking up to sanity. You can read a book like that. That is part of the perennial philosophy.

When you need it, you can read it because you need a reminder, a little pointer. You can even have several copies, one in your bathroom, one by your bedside, one in your office. Book like that, Tao Te Ching is like that, meditations by Marx Aurelius.

There's no continuous text. It's not, you can open anywhere, read a line or two. You can do it with Stillness Speaks also.

Open it, read a line or two. Even The Power of Now on New Earth, you can do that and other spiritually alive books. And they're to be used as a reminder, but not a substitute, a substitute for living it.

So if you use the device that is here meant to remind you and to point the way, if you, anything that is done to excess, no matter how good, turns into bad. So there is such a thing as an over-reliance, over-use of reminders, of pointers, where you almost compulsively read. Yes, you're taking in some energy.

Yes, it does something. And yet in your daily life, you're still not, you're not living it. And so it can happen.

It does happen to some people that the reading of spiritual books or going to seminars or workshops or retreats or listening to speakers becomes a substitute for living it in every

moment of your life. So you need to find the balance between using the help that the universe offers you. It's beautiful in the form of a teacher or so-called teacher.

It's just, there is no teacher as such. It's only, teacher is a function. I am a teacher when I sit in this chair.

But when I leave this room, I'm not a teacher anymore. It's only a function. It's not my identity to be a teacher.

It's a, that would be a form identity. So, but use the so-called teacher or teaching as a help. Don't get attached too much to the form of the teaching so that you can't let go.

Some people get attached to teachers. That's not the case with me because I work mostly with large groups. So it's more difficult to get attached to me as a teacher.

It's all in you. And if this book is powerful or any other spiritual book is powerful, how do you feel? Where is that power that you feel that's in the book?

Or the clarity or the spiritual power that you feel is in the teacher? How do you know that this is in the, that it's in the teacher? There must be something in you that recognizes it.

Because there are others to whom a spiritual book would be meaningless. So that in them which could recognize is not awake. They don't, a spiritual book is empty words.

This is still the case with some newspapers and magazines. They just, there's nobody in the entire newspaper or magazine that has any inner access to spiritual teaching, any form. And it could be a, I believe the entire New York Times, although it's a good paper, they don't have a single person who is open to it.

So whenever anything spiritual is mentioned, I read something again yesterday in the New York Times, they have to kind of distort it and make it into something slightly absurd. It says a certain number of people in the States have said they've had some kind of realization of the divine or God. And when they report it, they have to make it into something absurd.

There must be a funny angle to that. They have a realization of God. This is weird.

So there are still people who don't. So when you see that you feel the truth of it, it must be in you, otherwise you wouldn't see it. So the power is in you.

And the answer is in you. And you are the answer to all your searches, whatever your search is. You are the goal.

You are the answer. It's never outside. And then, of course, a time comes when you don't need any more spiritual books, but you can still enjoy them.

And it's a different kind of reading. You read a spiritual book. Wow, this is beautiful.

Yes, yes, yes. You read like, oh, yes, yes. That's it.

And there is an enjoyment in reading it. That's beautiful. And you don't need it anymore, but you enjoy it.

If the impulse comes, write down your own insights. When they come, they may come to you. You can be like Marcus Aurelius and write down a little out of the stillness, little, oh, even if they seem not that significant, write it down.

Then perhaps more comes because you've given it some attention. It has come as an original thought and you've given it some attention. Everybody knows, well, psychotherapists who work with analyzed dreams, they know that if you pay attention to your dreams, then more comes.

You remember them more and more and more significant dreams. That's at least about what Jung said. Carl Jung said, if you give attention to your dreams then and write them down.

This is not what I recommend here. Daily life is enough of a dream. You can do it.

I'm not saying don't, but what I'm saying is you give attention you appreciate, then more comes. So if you give attention to an original thought that comes to you rather than saying, oh, this is not important enough to write down, just write it down, then perhaps more comes. And then perhaps after a while, you have another book like this or whatever form it takes.

You don't write. You don't write. You can't write a book like that.

I can't write a book that is powerful. You as the person, no person can do that and you don't have to. It's only if there's openness in you.

And again, it's the, if you're too much in the form, the power doesn't flow through. If you access the formless stillness space, that's where the power flows through. And it does it through this form.

And if some of you become spiritual teachers, in quotation marks, or you already are in some way, in some way you already, if that consciousness, if the awakening consciousness is arising in you, you cannot not teach because your daily life and your interactions with other people become, you teach by being present. You teach presence. Even if you say nothing about presence.

By being present in daily life and in your interactions with others, you teach presence. And so that is part of your purpose in life. Now, whether it or not becomes a more formal teaching situation, that may be the case or may not be the case with you.

But again, you can't do it. If you feel, I'm now ready to be a spiritual teacher, that's probably not it. But if you have the feeling, I don't really know anything, that could be it.

And not afraid of not knowing anything. If you have the feeling, I don't know anything, and you get what I should know, then that's not, doesn't work. But not knowing is the most powerful state.

I said that previously. Not knowing and then see what words come. You can start by giving, if you have not doing so already, give little talks in your living room or somebody else's living room or not to your relatives, because they may not listen to you.

Remember what happened to Jesus when he went back to his own village. Nobody wanted to listen to him. Who is this guy here?

Do we know who he is? He's the son of such and such. Who does he think he is?

And if they'd had newspaper at the time, they would have had self-proclaimed master misleading the multitudes. Well, thank you to the form of Marcus Aurelius. The consciousness, of course, wrote the book, *The Timeless Consciousness*.

But it came through the form. The form was transparent enough for it to come through. We don't need to ask, well, was he enlightened or not?

Irrelevant. It was transparent enough for that power to come through. And of course, in your life also, that's the important question, is not, am I enlightened?

Am I going to be enlightened or fully awake or whatever? No. At this moment, are you dense as the form, opaque?

The more negative, the more identified with thought, the more dense you are as an energy field, not transparent. So the only important question is, at this moment, are you that transparency? So the form is still there, but it has lost its density, that is the ego, that is identification with thinking, that is every negative emotion.

You become contracted and dense. And when that goes through acceptance, surrender, alignment with what is, space opens up rather than space becomes more important than form. And you feel that.

You feel that in yourself. The space that you are is more important than the form that you are. And you feel that in yourself as you feel that primarily, you are your space.

Very much secondary is, yes, you're also here as a body with a past and certain psychological makeup and some thoughts, but it's secondary. And with that comes an enormous trust. If you can feel that primarily, you are space, which you cannot define.

You can't say, you don't really have a concept anymore of exactly who you are. As long

as you think you know who you are, that's not who you are. But when you no longer know who you are and become comfortable with not knowing who you are, then you're beginning to be who you are.

No opinion really anymore of who you are. You're just a space of consciousness. Can't really just say much more.

And so you're neither good or bad as that space of consciousness. You're not good or bad. You're beyond good and bad.

The opposites don't apply anymore. Your past becomes irrelevant if you are that space of timeless consciousness, which is what you are. Your past is secondary.

You can talk about it still and laugh about it, but it's not important, which is good news if your past isn't... It's good news if your past isn't that great. But if you're very proud of your past and your achievements, then perhaps you want to hang on.

So that can be an obstacle. The great things that I did, I did them. And so the trust that comes when you are a space, when you feel that you move around simply as a simple space of consciousness, fear goes, disappears from life, because fear is only...

Identification with form produces fear. Identification with space is freedom from fear.